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ABSTRACT

Designed to explore the ways language functions to help children gain access to meaning as they progress through the educational system, this journal issue views communication as a social, interactive process in which speakers and writers attempt to link into what listeners and readers know, want to know, or need to know. The 12 articles in the journal are: (1) Language as a Foundation for Education: the School Context (R. W. Shuy); (2) Language and School Success: Access to Meaning (M. L. King); (3) Factors Influencing Listening: Inside and Outside the Head (S. J. Samuels); (4) Learning to Talk and Talking to Learn (G. Wells and J. Wells); (5) Written Text as Social Interaction (M. Nystrand and M. Himley); (6) Peer Interaction in Learning English as a Second Language (H. Hester); (7) Listening and Responding: Hearing the Logic in Children's Classroom Narratives (S. Michaels); (8) What Children Know and Teach about Language Competence (P. G. Lazarus); (9) Creating the Classroom's Communicative Context: How Teachers and Microcomputers Can Help (C. R. Liebling); (10) How One Classroom Gives Access to Meaning (N. G. Platt); (11) Communication in Small Group Settings (G. S. Pinnell); and (12) Educational Policies That Support Language Development (J. Bates). (HOD)

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EDPRESS

Effective with this issue the following new *TIP* appointments have been announced by Dean Donald P. Anderson of the College of Education, The Ohio State University: Editor—Donald G. Lux, professor of educational theory and practice; Associate Editors—Judith L. Green, associate professor of educational policy and leadership, and Timothy E. Heron, associate professor of human services education. Please see the inside back cover for details.

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This Issue

This issue explores the ways language functions to help children gain access to meaning as they progress through the educational system. The articles are written from the perspective of talking and writing, the *expressive* arts; but the *receptive* modes of reading and listening are implied in the underlying assumption that all communication is *interactive*. Talking requires a listener; writing, a reader.

Communication in this issue is viewed as more than a speaker or writer conveying his or her intentions to a listener or reader. Rather, it is conceived as a social interactive process in which speakers and writers attempt to link into what listeners and readers know, want to know, or need to know. The process requires *collaboration* between participants as they negotiate meanings, share insights and bits of knowledge, and seek common understandings. The result of such interaction is the creation of understandings that are different from the meanings previously held by the participants in the communication. Teachers' views of knowledge vary as they try to see it through their pupils' knowing, and a written text changes as it is read by different people, for different purposes, or at different times.

Education relies on such shared meanings between teachers and students, learning resources and learners, and students with peers. The authors of the following articles explore these and related concepts in the contexts of home, primary school classrooms, an adult seminar, and the language policies of a school system. The over-arching purpose is to further understandings about how language functions for children as they strive for success in school.

Gay Su Pinnell
Martha L. King
Guest Editors

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Language as a Foundation for Education: The School Context

A few years ago a New York psychiatrist did an informal survey of his fellow psychoanalysts' beliefs and attitudes toward the techniques of their profession. One question, in particular, was significant for our purposes: "What are the tools available to analysts as they deal with their patients?" Not one of the psychiatrists surveyed included language as a tool. The psychiatrist who conducted the survey was astonished by this for he considered language to be their major tool.

Often the things closest to us are the most invisible. Virtually every activity of life is conducted in language, yet we seldom recognize language as an important medium for delivering service in department stores or dry cleaning establishments, for delivering medical care in hospitals or doctors' offices, for determining justice in the courts or, sadly enough, for educating our children. In these, and in all other activities of life, language is the essential foundation for exchanging information, offering opinions or advice, determining the facts upon which decisions are made, requesting the unknown, and even reasoning through personal or abstract problems.

It is the language foundation for education that is the focus of our attention here. Education is to be given credit for recognizing small glimmers, from time to time, of the fact that learning relies heavily on language. The journey toward understanding this fact, however, has been ponderously slow and difficult, not simply because of the invisibility of the subject, but also because of the false information, incomplete knowledge, and stereotypes of language which educators inherit and pass along to future generations with discouraging faithfulness.

In the '40s and '50s, the major task of the few linguists who were concerned about the language foundations of education was to dispel the marvelously inaccurate information about language that was generally held. English is *not* a Latin language, two negatives do *not* make a positive, dictionaries are *not* the final arbiters of usage, English does *not* have six tenses of verbs and five cases of nouns.

In the '60s, more subtle tasks were our mandate. Dialect differences do *not* signal inferiority; bilingual children are *not* crippled by their bilingualism; language change, like physical change, is a sign of life, *not* a step toward linguistic destruction and chaos.

In the '70s and '80s, the language foundations of education became more proactive and less reactive. The task of linguists shifted from putting out the fires of false information and stereotypes to that of addressing the issues of incomplete information. This became possible as new research and theory about language developed and matured. In the '40s and '50s, linguists worked a great deal on phonology and morphology and naturally attempted to apply this knowledge to reading and language learning. As a result, well meaning monstrosities such as "the linguistic approach to reading" were born. Decoding was the major area of linguistic application to reading, since letter-sound

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correspondences came closest to the linguists' work on phonology and morphology. Language teaching focused on pattern-practice drills, largely for the same reason: What was known about linguistics fit this type of application.

In the '60s, linguistic theory and research turned inward. The Chomskyan revolution turned the attention of linguists to syntax, a promising area of application to education, but turned its back on application in general. The new theory was abstract and difficult. It demanded a commitment of energy and time that few educators could afford. Linguistics was getting its theoretical house in order and it had little time to worry about related fields. But even within linguistics, a sort of counterrevolution was taking place. As the theoretical focus more and more removed itself from the non-linguistic world, a number of linguists chose a concurrent path. Accepting the good brought about by the advances in syntactic theory, these linguists, sociolinguists and ethnographers in particular, attempted to ground the new information to real-life settings. The key concepts became context, natural, functional, variability along a continuum, etc. Then, in the '70s, sociolinguists were also joined by theoretical linguists who began to think about language units larger than a sentence. They began to ask questions about meaning, a long neglected concept, and began to distinguish semantic word meaning from contextual discourse meaning.

This gradual development of language knowledge, from phonology, to morphology, to syntax, to discourse, paralleled by a gradual development from form to function, now places language knowledge in a position to be most helpful to educators and students alike. Without forsaking the smaller units of language, linguistics has added the larger units as a part of its universe of knowledge. In doing so, the language knowledge base has added a macro picture to its former micro image. By its concern with discourse, spoken or written, it has become holistic rather than reductionist and, at last, it has much to say about children's writing, classroom oral interaction, and even testing.

It is not entirely the fault of educators that most of their understanding of language consists of the forms of language. The forms of language were, until very recently, the basic stuff of linguistic analysis. As noted earlier, linguists analyzed the forms of the sound system, the forms of the morphology, and the forms of the sentence. If this is what linguists thought language consisted of, why would one expect educators to think differently? In any case, the forms of language fit nicely into the general form-oriented approach to teaching. Curricula were built on a basically reductionist principle; that is, the belief that things such as reading and writing can be best learned by taking small bits at a time, a synthetic approach. These small, isolated bits were then combined, one after the other, and put together as the events called reading and writing. In practice, this learning to decode (the smallest units of language) precedes learning to read words which, in turn, precedes learning to read sentences. The analogy to writing instruction is obvious. First write words, then write phrases, then write sentences, then write paragraphs.

In sharp contrast to the synthetic approach is the analytic system, championed by Immanual Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and other philosophers, in which it is felt that the best way to find out how things work is to start with an entire context, the relevant whole, and to help children actively *construct* the focus of their world with as many of the clues available to them as possible. The approach has been called *constructivism* by those who espouse it (Magoon, 1977). Constructivists take social context into consideration when analyzing their data whereas reductionists believe in isolating the behavior from such contexts in order to reduce the complexity of the task. The question then becomes, how simple is it to process an isolated fact? Conversely, how complex is it to see the same fact in its natural context? The following example may illustrate better.

Suppose a child is given a new word, *gorples*, to read. The word has never been seen before. The goal is to understand the meaning of this word. The two approaches differ as follows:

Reductionist: Stimulus: *gorples*

1. Decode letter-sound correspondences
   g /g/, o /ow/, r /r/, p /p/, l /l/
2. Generalize -es inflection either as a noun plural or as a verb, third person, singular
3. Pronounce word

Result: Word pronounced, meaning unknown

Constructivist: Stimulus: *I saw seven yellow gorples growing in the garden.*

1. Use context clues to establish that
   a. These things grow in gardens (probably flowers or vegetables)
   b. There are seven of them (number could indicate flowers)

    c. They are yellow (more likely flowers than vegetables)
2. Use context clues to establish gorples as noun plural
3. Use decoding skills (as in reductionist approach), if necessary

Result: Important context clues to meaning give significant help to knowing meaning.

It is clear from the above example that considerably more information is available through the constructivist rather than the reductionist approach. In this case, the linguistic context of the word in question is the carrier of such informaton. The more clues given, the better the understanding of meaning. Serious doubt must be cast on an approach which removes such information in an effort to be simple.

Taking the reductionist-constructivist controversy a step further, we can ask what benefit can there be to a student when the focus of our instruction is on the *forms* of communication rather than on the *functions or goals* of the communication. Would medical schools train physicians only in the social skills of doctor-patient communication without giving instruction in the scientific basis for such delivery? Absolutely not. But education has been beset by an argument which goes like this. "It is necessary to be socially correct in language use. Therefore, if a child makes an error of form, it should be corrected. Such correction is what language teaching is all about." What this argument leaves out is the fact that it is also necessary to have something to say. It is necessary to reason clearly. It is necessary to use language to get things done. *Then,* it is necessary to speak or write language acceptably.

Going back to our medical school model, it is necessary to know what the human body and mind are like. It is necessary to know the medications and procedures necessary to heal people. *Then,* it is necessary to know how to deliver that service effectively and appropriately. According to a recent report of the Association of American Medical Colleges, there is in medical school an overbalance of focus on techical training and a tremendous lack of training in how to deliver it ("New Medical School Directions," 1982). In education, the reverse is true. There is a tremendous emphasis on appropriate language form, but extremely little on communicative purposes. If language is the foundation for education, the curriculum and instruction models cannot provide only part of the picture.

Perhaps the problem stems from the fact that we have not defined communicative purposes well. Why do children talk? To get things done. A baby cries to get fed, get a diaper changed, or to get held. If the cry is heard, the parent soon learns which of these ambiguous meanings was intended. Eventually the baby learns to use langauge to accomplish this same goal. Whether the baby's communication is a cry, a single word, "milk," or a complete sentence, "Mommy, I want milk," the function is the same. Function, as this example illustrates, precedes form. We all use language purposefully to get things done.

If this is why children talk, why do they write? Probably not for the same reasons, at least not in most schools. Students write in response to the teacher's demand to write. They do not write to accomplish a personal goal, as they do with talking. Their writing, in short, is neither self-generated nor functional. Since it is neither self-generated nor functional, it is also not likely to be natural. Not being natural, it is also unlikely to be contextually relevant. That is, student writers write on demand about topics they don't originate, to unknown audiences, for purpose not their own, while sitting at desks or tables in classrooms, under supervision, during specific hours of the day.

Why is there such a contrast between the functional, natural, self-generated, and contextually relevant characteristics of talk and writing? Probably because we learn to talk *out* of school while we learn to write *in* school. And why should the non-school/school context make such a difference? (a) Because school language is viewed as a reductionist activity; (b) because school language begins with a focus on form rather than function; (c) because school language is teacher-generated, not student generated; (d) because school language, like tests, wrenches the child from the natural context and creates an artificial one; (e) because school writing begins at a level of formality that talk does not require; (f) because school language inherits a tradition which argues that everything a child writes must be evaluated. These differences form the basis for the rest of this paper. As we begin the analysis of each point, however, we keep in mind the contrast between how children learn to talk in their native language, outside the school context, in comparison to how we teach them, *in* the school, to write that same language. The research evidence presented here is, in each case, a counter-example to the way things are typically done. They are counter-examples because in each case the instructor has an innate belief that language is a *constructivist* activity, that *function* is more primary than form, that language must be primarily *self-generated*, that language must be contextually relevant, and that not everything a child says, reads, or writes is subject to evaluation or correction.

Language is a constructivist, not reductionist activity.

Many scholars have recently criticized research which claims to interpret the intelligence of minority children, stating that such work isolates the factors being studied from their social context. Even more recently, the generally lower scores of black students on the SAT has been in a broader context of socioeconomic background. By reducing the behavior on intelligence or aptitude test data to its most elementary parts, researchers have consistently overlooked the real factors which account for the substantive differences. These factors were lost by the reductionist approach to the problem. The reduced facts were still there, but their interpretation was skewed by other facts which were not taken into account.

In learning to read, for example, children acquire the rather simple ability to relate letters to sounds. Doing this is not an evil activity. In fact it might well prove helpful in many ways, especially learning to spell. Where reading instruction goes awry is the same place false SAT interpretations went wrong. By reducing learning to read to a rigid sequential decoding-first approach, as virtually all commercial reading programs do, schools fall into the reductionist fallacy.

In academics we are too often overconcerned with consistency and reliability and too unconcerned about the validity of what we are being reliable about. Our research often demonstrates this oversight. We quantify unquantifiable data, run statistical tests of significance, and conclude that we have reliable results. The danger of such an approach is that it seriously underestimates the ability and potential of children's minds. Far too many linguists are overconcerned about being theoretically consistent, that is, true to whatever theory they rally around when, in fact, different linguistic theories may have different strengths and capabilities for addressing different problems.

What education leaves out of the equation is that several theories may be operating at the same time or that different theories are appropriate for different aspects of the learning activity. Immanuel Kant first set forth the distinction between the analytical approach as explicative and the synthetic approach as expansive. Wittgenstein later elaborated on this distinction and concluded that the best way to discover how the mind functions is by taking into account the total context in which such functioning takes place (Wittgenstein, 1953). The analytic approach reveals a set of rules that are being constructed by learners who come to know the world by actively constructing it, and this approach has come to be known as *constructivism*. However logical it may be to believe that children need to have the elements of reading or writing chopped up into little pieces in order to learn, the *reductionist* perspective underestimates the fantastic abilities these same children exhibited when they did not use a reductionist approach to learn to speak their native language.

Videotapes of 18-month-old children, for example, show children doing such things as uttering "k,k,k," while moving their foot back and forth (Wolfram, 1982). Without the videotape, we might conclude, erroneously, that the child is learning to say the initial sound, *k*, and that the reductionist approach is justified. But the entire context shows the child's foot actually kicking at the same time he utters the *k* sound. The linguistic question then becomes, "What is a word" or, for that matter, "What is a sentence." "K" in this context, given the speaker, is the equivalent of a meaningful verbal symbol. The context defines it in a way quite different from the reductionist impression that only individual sounds are being uttered.

If children learned to read and write in the same constructivist way they learned the more complex task of speaking their mother tongue, the reductionist view of language, which breaks big things down into little things and removes all comprehensive clues that social and linguistic context provides, is at war with their natural learning strategies.

In language, function is more primary than form.

Learners need to get things done with language, not prove how correct they can be with its forms. To do this, learners need to attend not just to the forms of language, but also to the functions. To attend to functions, one has to take into consideration such contextual concerns as audience, topic, setting, genre, and intention. Form is acquired largely in order to communicate function and with increasing awareness of its complexity and significance.

We know little about how the strategies of revealing language functions are acquired, but it seems clear that the functions themselves are universal. For example, requesting, clarifying, complaining, accepting, directing, denying, refusing, and all the sequencing functions such as opening, continuing, getting a turn, interrupting, and closing appear to be available to all languages and ages. The various strategies used to reveal such functions are, however, more developmentally realized. From experience it is apparent that not all strategies for expressing functions are learned by all people and that learners' ability to acquire form may eventually by-pass their ability to acquire functions or appropriate strategies for realizing the functions.

Oddly enough, language functions and the various strategies of revealing them are not taught and yet they are clearly learned. Even pre-school children learn to get a turn, to refuse, and many other useful langauge functions without any conscious instruction.

If these generalizable functions of language are important to be learned it is obvious that it would behoove us to *discover* what they are. There are many ways in which this could be done. We could ask people (teachers, students, others) how they use language to get things done. This is inefficient, however, since most people are unaware of how they use language as they use it. In addition, the science of language analysis, until very recently, has not itself had very effective ways of describing language use.[1] Studies of cohesive ties get at part of what it means to be a good speaker or writer, but only to the extent that language can be seen to hold together well or be cohesive (sequencing or referencing functions). It seems that there ought to be more than this. None of the current methods of language analysis really gets at functions in a way that will provide some basis for comparative study. None of the traditionally used methods of language analysis can tell us in any broad way how writers or speakers use language to get things done.

What are these other functions? In an effort to discover them, I examined the corpus of written text in Staton's NIE supported Dialogue Journal Project (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft, & Mrs. R [pseud.], 1982). This body of data consists of some 4600 pages of the daily writing of 26 students in one Los Angeles sixth grade classroom as they wrote, each day, to their teacher and as the teacher wrote, each day, back to them. A sample of two weeks of these dialogue journal entries was selected in both the fall and spring terms and the functions used by ten of the students and the teacher were analyzed. The ten children were determined on the basis of their potential for representing the range of dialogue journal writing and development.

While the full significance of a functional analysis such as this cannot be dealt with here (see Shuy, 1982), some general aspects can be discussed. The children in this sample use far more language functions in their dialogue journal writing than they do in essay writing, which, by definition, primarily calls for reporting facts and opinions. Dialogue journal writing, therefore, offers an area for practicing important language functions which traditional school writing never taps. Second, dialogue journal writing is much closer to spoken language in function and form than any other kind of writing available for scrutiny.[2] Since it is like oral language, it serves as a bridge between what children already have learned to do, talk, and what they are learning to do, write. Third, the freedom to use such functions as complaining, promising, evaluating, and asking questions, opens the door to the development of rational argumentation, for if these functions are to be felicitous, they must give evidence for their intended goals. In this data, Staton was able to demonstrate the actual development of reasoning ability throughout the school year (Staton et al., 1982).

Language must be primarily self-generated.

This is one of the most obvious, but apparently invisible, characteristics of written and spoken language. Somehow schools have come to believe that if we can put words into the mouths of our students we will be teaching them to talk or write. Once again, we need to do little more than look to the infant language learner for counter-examples. The first utterance of a newborn baby is thought to be a cry, but a good case can be made that this utterance actually functions as a complaint. The newborn's cry may well have the underlying sentence form of "I don't like it out here." However this is interpreted, the fact is that the utterance is self-generated. From this point on, humans talk, or attempt to talk, almost entirely because they want to, and about things that are important to them. This is not to say that life never gives us occasions to have to talk about things we do not want to talk about. Children are made to recite. Teachers do ask test-type questions. It is when children start school, in fact, that the self-generatedness of language begins to be replaced with teacher-generatedness or school-generatedness. Topics are selected for students to talk about, write about, or read about. This is not an evil activity in itself, but it does run counter to the essential reason why language had been used in contexts other than school.

Of the language functions noted earlier, the school writing and talking context traditionally provides few opportunities for children to respond to information questions (those for which the teacher does not know the answer), to predict future events, to complain, to give directives, to evaluate, to offer, to promise, and oddly enough, to ask information and opinion questions.

The language function of complaining will serve as an illustration. In the final report to NIE, *Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event* (Staton et al., 1982), the value of complaining both socially and cognitively is discussed. By permitting and even encouraging student complaining in the dialogue journals, the teacher enables the students to feel socially and personally enfranchised, to present their points of view on self-generated topics that are important to them, and to establish a personal voice. Cognitively, the teacher uses the complaint to help the students to learn to think clearly, to present evidence and support for their positions, and to be relevant (Shuy, 1982). Drawing on research in speech act theory, the analysis of student complaints revealed the development of rational thinking through the complaint structure throughout the school year. Some children were able to offer felicitous complaints (demonstrating conflict, giving new information, providing an evidential account) on interpersonal topics, but not on academic topics. Some never got beyond the middle states of felicity during the year. The range of felicity for the complaints offered by the student sample was from 85 percent to 15 percent.

For example, the common complaint, "Math is boring," is infelicitous because it does not provide new information and it does not offer an evidential account. It does little more than infer a conflict of some sort. In sharp contrast is the complaint of Annette, one of the more felicitous complainers:

> Every time the ball gets lost or goes over the fence Gordon blames it on me and says that I'm the ball monater and then I should take care of the ball. Then when the ball suppose to be taken out he says that he's the ball monater. And I'm only substitute ball monater. (Shuy, 1982)

Conflict is clearly demonstrated, new information is given, an evidential account is offered, and the perlocutionary effect is to be convincing.

The point of this illustration of complaining is twofold. First, the topic selected and the language used are totally self-generated. Annette is using language to get things done—things *she* wants to get done. Second, the illustration shows that rational thinking can be accomplished and developed in contexts *other than* classroom essays and on topics other than academic ones. The teacher uses the everyday lives of her students as a teaching-learning event. When infelicitous complaints occur, the teacher rarely ignores them until they are presented in a felicitous manner. More commonly, she asks questions intended to draw out the necessary conditions of felicity, especially the condition of giving an evidential account.

The reason this language can be self-generated at all is that the communication is between two people. It is *interactive*, requiring or providing the opportunity for both self-generated topic introductions and self-generated responses. The self-generation of topics is obvious from all we know about everyday conversation. The self-generation of responses is made possible by the fact that the teacher's questions are information questions (those for which the correct answer is not already known) rather than elicitation questions (those for which the teacher knows the answer before she asks it).

Language which is interactive is language which replicates natural conversation. Being interactive, it opens the door to self-generatedness. Being self-generated, it can be functional, freeing the speaker or writer to use it to get things done. Being functional, it can be used to know the world and to be actually constructing it as one goes along.

Language must be contextually relevant.

To this point it should be clear that any effort to segment concepts such as constructivism, functionalism, self-generationism, and contextual relevance is doomed to failure. For the sake of convenience, I have tried to list them separately, more from the influence of a reductionist pedagogy than from any holistic realism. Already I have used *context* to define constructivism, functional, and self-generated. Now I purport to be able to define it in isolation, a ridiculous notion at best. But perhaps out of a false sense of academic purity, some divisions are necessary. Four types of context illuminate language and serve as a foundation for understanding it: (a) linguistic context; (b) social context; (c) situational context, and (d) physical context. All four types of context are critically important foundations for language in the schools.

The development of sociolinguistics has been evidence of the growing concern for context. We have always known that context contributes heavily to language development. It is only recently, however, that we have begun to specify the dimensions of context enough to begin to show how it actually works. Gumperz and Herasimchuk (1975), in their study of teacher-student interactions, show that children make use of a number of variables such as task expectancy, role differences, and previous utterances in the conversation to formulate interpretation and thereby to learn. It is not difficult to expand this list of context variables to include classroom placement, size, competing activities, simultaneous events, equipment, and so on. Some relationships between context and language will be direct; others indirect (Erickson & Shultz, 1977). Cook-Gumperz (1978) shows context to be a part of the communication and learning process, a set of fluctuating variables which are constantly being reevaluated by all participants in the process and during the interaction.

Likewise in the recent classroom language research of Lucas (1983), Vernacular-Black-English (VBE)-speaking fourth graders are shown to switch from a higher degree of VBE during small group discussion with the teacher *not* present to a much lower degree of VBE when the teacher *is* present at the discussion.

Even five-year-olds have been demonstrated to differentiate the perceived status of their peers through language use. Montes (1978) developed a research strategy in which she asked a series of questions to kindergarten children about how they would get back a loaned object from other classmates. Borrowers who were perceived as having lower five-year-old status in that classroom were given harsher, more physical, and threatening directives than the borrowers who were perceived to have higher peer status.

The principle of context is of great importance in understanding the language foundations of education. It may seem unreasonable, if not ludicrous, to adolescent males to be expected to play football in Standard English. It may seem silly to a native Spanish speaker to have to go to school in English at all. It may appear sissy to a ten-year-old city boy to have to read with what is referred to as "expression." The range of variability caused by such context variables is only beginning to be understood.

Nothing in language exists outside of a context. Yet in much of life, particularly in education, we pretend that such context does not matter. We isolate letters from words and we isolate words from sentences. By doing this we remove the wonderful redundance which context brings, making the process more difficult at the same time that we think we are making it simple. We give articulation tests with words isolated in lists and expect to get something resembling natural speech behavior.

Linguistic, social, situational, and physical context must be considered in the real understanding of how language works. A proficient writer, speaker, or reader will take all four under advisement, probably without thinking about it at all. The real job of education is to teach when the forms which we love so dearly are appropriate to one context, but not to another. Our job is not to reduce language to a one-context variety. This will produce automatons and reduce our humanity to a predictable, dull sameness.

Conclusions

The language foundations of education, therefore, are not isolable from the theories and delivery systems that education chooses to follow. Since language is a *holistic, constructivist* activity, it is not well suited to reductionist teaching. If we insist on breaking the wholeness of language into small pieces, we will not get the benefits of what language has to offer.

Language is primarily a *functional* activity (it gets things done) rather than form focused. If we insist on teaching the forms of language, we will not get the benefit of its major purpose.

Language is a self-generated activity, controlled by the person who uses it. If we insist on letting the schools, the curriculum, or the instruction dictate the generation of language, we will lose most of the richness of the natural learning strategies which children have already acquired before they come to school. From the point that a school-generated language is adopted, the strategy actually works against the very learning it is attempting to promote.

Language is *context* relevant and full of the variability which provides the subtle language adjustments for different social, situational, and physical contexts. The real goal of language education should have at its core the learning of how to vary language to be appropriate to a myriad of legitimate contexts. The key concepts of this paper are constructivist, holistic, functional, natural, self-generated, and context. Language could not offer a richer heritage.

Notes

1. One of the most commonly used measures, the *T-unit*, is based on syntax rather than on functions and is flawed by inadequate definitions of what complexity is and by the odd assumption that more complexity is better than less.
2. Surreptitious note passing, of course, may challenge this role, but such notes are not usually available for scrutiny.

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Martha L. King

Language and School Success: Access to Meaning

Language is at the center of children's experience in school: the human relationships they form with teachers and with their peers, the way learning activities are organized, and most significantly, the way new experience is perceived and remembered. Language is ever present, influencing the form and quality of the educational experience and the judgments made about children as learners. Those who talk easily and make their understandings and questions clear to the teacher get more attention and are able to influence the curriculum in the direction of their particular needs. Children who are less articulate or who speak a language or dialect that differs substantially from that normally used in the classroom often are misunderstood or overlooked in discussions.

Just as success in learning is linked to skill in language, failure in school ultimately involves some kind of failure in language. Sometimes it is the teachers' failure to understand the children's language; sometimes it is failure in or absence of any real communication in the classroom or throughout the school. Sometimes it is failure of children to make the transition from speech to reading and writing, and too often it is the failure of both teachers and students to link the ideas presented in the language of textbooks to the reality children know. Many children are able to understand the content and principles of a particular subject when they are met in direct experience but fail to get similar meanings when they are presented in spoken or written language.

Whatever the reasons, children's success and failure in school are bound up in the way they share and create meaning through language. When we consider the number of children who fail in school each year and the countless others who find little joy or satisfaction in the experience, the role of language in the development and exchange of meaning takes on new significance. This article explores the role of language in learning and communication practices that can enhance or limit children's access to meaning in the classroom.

Learning Language and Teaching Language

One of the great adjustments children have to make when they enter school is to learn how and when to talk in that new environment. The language of the classroom differs substantially from the talk children use in the home, particularly in regard to the kinds of questions asked. But when children fail to respond or answer inappropriately, they often are seen as uncooperative or "not listening."

Following a "grandparents day" visit to school, the grandmother of a first grader told me her grandson "simply doesn't listen to the teacher!" She explained that the teacher had engaged the children in a lesson designed to get them to respond to her questions "in complete sentences." Addressing children in turn, she asked questions about everyday matters, such as, "Will you come to school tomorrow?" to which the children were expected to reply, "Yes, I will come to school tomorrow."

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Eventually, it became the grandson's turn and she asked, "Clint, do you read?" Clint, who had been busy at his desk drawing dinosaurs, replied, "Sometimes." The teacher tried again, "Clint, do you like to read?" Back came the response, "Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't!"

His grandmother concluded that "Clint hadn't listened to the directions which the teacher had given very clearly." But Clint had answered honestly and sufficiently to the *content* of the question. Whether or not he had the conscious awareness of his own language *use* to enable him to respond to the teacher in a particular form is unclear. To express my thoughts, I turned to the grandmother and asked, "Lois, do you like to read?" to which she laughingly replied, "Sometimes," realizing that her response (as that of her grandson) was simply the natural thing to say.

The example raises several questions about the teacher's understanding of language learning, the child's awareness of his own language use, and the expectations for talk in school. The teacher was probably not aware that she was asking her first graders to use language in school in ways that are seldom used outside. Perhaps she was following some district curriculum materials that were designed to prepare children for language tests.

Traditionally, language teaching has centered on four main channels of communication—talking, listening, reading, and writing. Approaches to instruction and evaluation have emphasized *external* observable factors in language performance to the neglect of implicit matters such as purpose and uses of language that are central to the development of meaning. A closer examination of language learning would help the teacher to view Clint's behavior in a different light and to try to learn more about the *internal* cognitive and linguistic factors that exist.

In the real world of talk, individuals intuitively follow certain maxims or principles in order to make themselves understood and their messages interesting to others. Successful communicators attend first to the *reality* or the substance of ideas that make up communication. Second, they *cooperate* and try to express ideas in ways that will be understood (Grice, 1975; Clark & Clark, 1977). Listeners follow the same principles. They assume the speaker is referring to a situation or set of ideas that they can make sense of and they respond accordingly. Listeners also use the cooperative principle, as described by the Clarks:

> Listeners use the cooperative principle to interpret sentences in the belief that the speaker is trying to tell the truth, tell them all they need to know, and no more, say things that are relevant, and use sentences clearly and unambiguously. (p. 73)

In the conversation reported above, Clint was adhering to the cooperative principle, and moreover, was following important *maxims* as identified by Grice, which include (a) quantity—provide the information that is required, but no more than is needed; (b) quality—say what you believe to be true; (c) relation—make contributions relevant to the ongoing conversation; and (d) manner—speak clearly, avoid obscurity, ambiguity, and wordiness (pp. 45-46).

If the teacher in the example had followed the reality and cooperative principles, she would have asked the children different questions or engaged them in talking about what they like to do in their free time. Clint probably would have contributed something, such as, "I like to build with Legos and draw dinosaurs—and sometimes I like to read." The response would have told the teacher not only that he could talk in sentences but also the kind of sentence he could use easily.

In the home children have attained remarkable success in learning language; yet few parents make a practice of rehearsing children in saying sentences or repeating other grammatical constructions. Admittedly, they remind children of certain social conventions: "Say 'Thank you' to Uncle Ben," or "Ask Aunt Mary to come back." Usually, parents listen to children and help the language along by supplying needed information and necessary wording in response to the meanings they infer from the child's utterances (Snow, 1977). Most of their teaching is in the form of repeating key words and constructions and using pauses, stress, and voice inflection to alert children to important features of language. At the same time, they keep their main attention on the meanings being conveyed. Happily, the method works extremely well and children learn both the grammatical system of language and the conventions surrounding its use in social situations in a surprisingly short period of time. By three years, according to Ervin-Tripp (1970), children have learned the semantic and syntactic structures of questions, like those used in the first grade lesson above, and also, how to use ellipses or abbreviated answers to respond.

The most efficient way to learn any skill is to concentrate on the outcome of the overall task

(Polanyi, 1966). In learning language, this means keeping one's attention on the meaning, on *what* is communicated, rather than on *how* it is said. A shift in focus to *how* something is being said can result in a breakdown in the flow of ideas with the speaker becoming confused and forgetting what she or he intended to say. Polanyi explained this phenomenon in terms of one's use of *focal* and *subsidiary* awareness when performing any skill, such as riding a bicycle (or speaking and writing). Success depends on keeping one's main attention on the global activity (keeping the bicycle in motion) while aware in a subsidiary way of other matters (where the foot is placed on the pedals, for example). Surely, the implication for language learning is that growth occurs when the focus is on the outcome of meaningful activities and the form of language is secondary. Reading authorities (Clay, 1979; McKenzie, 1977) claim that the first stage of reading is one in which children are attending primarily to the meaning aspects of stories and environmental print and it is in the second phase of skill development that they attend primarily to the print and sound-symbol relationships. In the example above from the first grade, a communication problem arose because the teacher's focus was on *form* and the child's attention was on the *content* of the language exchanged.

Composition and Comprehension

Far too often, both at home and in school, we behave as though talking and listening (or reading and writing) were like playing a game of "Catch." We assume that a listener (or reader) "catches" or receives the message dispatched, just as a ball player catches the same intact object that was thrown by the pitcher. But anyone who has played the schoolroom game of "Gossip" knows that the pitcher/catcher concept is a poor metaphor for speaking and listening. By the time the "gossip" is whispered around a circle of six or eight people, there is little likeness to the original message. Unlike the ball in the game of "Catch," the message has changed its content as each of the players passed on what was his or her impression of it. There is a sender and receiver in all communication, but there the analogy ends. What passes between the two is not a static object, but a dynamic message that is shaped in unique ways by the sender and may be only partially received or substantially transformed by the receiver.

Embedded in talking and listening exchanges, and also in writing and reading, are two fundamental skills that operate across all forms of communication: *composition* and *comprehension*. These cognitive/linguistic processes govern the way meaning is selected and shaped—or composed—in language by a speaker/writer and abstracted or reconstructed from the verbal symbols—comprehended—by a listener/reader. One's ability to compose or comprehend the content of verbal messages is influenced by a host of factors beyond mere skill in encoding or decoding visual and auditory symbols. These range from (a) the speaker/writer's purpose, knowledge of the subject-matter, and sensitivity to the needs and interest of his or her audience to (b) the listener/reader's interests, purpose, knowledge relevant to the message, and attitudes toward the message and its author. The composing/comprehending processes involve a constellation of attitudes, physical competence, and linguistic and cognitive skills, as well as experience of the real world (see Samuels, this issue).

Speakers and listeners (or readers and writers) form a unique triangle of relationship with each other and with the meaning to be shared. Relationships between senders and receivers range from intimate to formal, to unknown. Each participant also has his or her own relationship to the content, influenced by background of experiences and inner world of thought, feelings, and attitudes. Individuals view the world differently. They not only have had different experiences, but they represent those experiences to themselves in different ways (Britton, 1970). Even a common classroom activity that children regularly share, such as a reading group, will not insure that children carry away the same experience. They bring different abilities, feelings, and experiential knowledge to the situation. Then, as they leave, each member will tell himself or herself a uniquely personal story about what occurred in the group. That "story" or representation will influence the person's memory of the experience. Britton (1970) uses a camera metaphor to explain:

> We are not cameras, even though a part of what we do at any moment can in fact be explained in terms of the camera, for just as the screen of the camera bears a picture of what is outside, so our representation of the world is a partial likeness. It is a partial likeness because, at any moment, at the same time as we are drawing in from the outside world (to put it very crudely) we are also projecting our wishes, our hopes and fears and expectations about the world. Our representation of that situation is the resultant

> of the two processes, that of *internalizing* and *externalizing* and because what you project is a function of your personality (your mood at the moment as well as your habitual ways of feeling and thinking about things), and what I project is a function of my personality, our representations of the shared situation will be different. (1970, p. 14)

A teacher's view of the world may at times get in the way of his or her ability to perceive pupils' reality or competence. A powerful example can be found in recent studies of sharing time (Cazden, 1982; 1983). Typically during sharing time children are given the opportunity to speak on a chosen topic or tell a personal experience; they create a brief oral text in which they share something important to them. Teachers' comments and questions usually cause the child to say more or generate contributions from the listeners, thus supporting the child's narrative. As Cazden notes, some children get greater support and more sharing time simply because their stories are more consistent with the teachers' views of what a narrative should be. Those whose story schema or style of telling differ substantially from the teacher's perceptions find their contributions cut short and their intentions ignored or redirected (see also Michaels, this issue).

Reality as a Personal Construction

Human beings actively and creatively build their own minds; i.e., they represent the world of things, ideas, values, and aspirations in a personal way. They create for themselves a "personal construction" of experience which, according to Kelly (1963), becomes *reality* for them and governs how they see a new situation and what they can learn from it. Kelly argued that human beings are born to anticipate and to make predictions about the present and the future based on the way they construe the world. Their success in communication lies in their ability to make relevant predictions about significant messages, events, and relationships encountered in life; these predictions in turn are dependent on the personal view, or "theory of the world in the head" that we all have. What one is, the "self," is also a personal construction, as Bruner (1982) stated:

> Just as we build a construct of the world, the self too is a construction, a result of action and symbolization; that is, not a composite of the raw "as it happens" events that we confront in life.

The building blocks of this construction of self and of the world, to use Rumelhart's metaphor, are *schemata*, the fundamental elements on which all information processing depends (1980, p. 33). Schemata are the intuitive rules or *constructs* through which we process sensory data and also retrieve information from memory. They provide the bases on which we determine goals and subgoals, allocate resources, and generally live our lives. Schemata are organized into *schema* which represent basic concepts or units of meaning stored in the mind. These are encoded in terms of the *typical* situations and events in which individuals have encountered that concept. For example, young children, many before school, show that they have "a sense of story" (Applebee, 1978), which means they have a general understanding of the structure and certain elements that are typically found in stories. Rumelhart claims that these "packets of knowledge," stored in the mind, also have embedded within them information about *how this knowledge is to be used* (p. 34).

Such concepts about how the mind functions and learning occurs raise interesting questions regarding some common practices in teaching. What notions about the *uses* of reading, for example, are first grade children likely to derive from their repetitive phonics drills and workbook exercises! On the other hand, schema theory can help teachers to understand the wide variation in children's responses to the many different learning activities provided in the classroom. Teachers frequently are puzzled by the slight attention some children give to stories being read aloud and the meager amount they can recall of the story content or the key elements of plot and characters. While several factors may contribute to this lack of interest and recall, surely one pervasive influence is the children's prior experience with stories—in hearing them told or read aloud in their homes or early school experience.

Access to Meaning through Negotiation and Collaboration

Children's construction of the world and of self begins in the home where their routine actions and associated meanings are linked with their first experiences with language. They learn to talk as they interact with their parents in frequently repeated and purposeful activities. Meanings and their expression in words are embedded in the joint actions as children and parents together build an integrated system of language and meaning. The process occurs in the intimacy and the culture of the home and learning flourishes or fades in response to the quality of experiences and support given by the family and others close to the child.

Illustrating the process is the following dialogue,[1] in which 2½-year-old Emily and her mother are planting seeds in the family garden during early evening. Emily has just opened a package of lettuce seeds:

Em: I opened dat right!
M: Yes, you opened that. Why don't I give you a shovel? Here's a little trowel and you can see if you can get the ground nice and soft for these lettuce seeds.
Em: I want . . . I want to have it.
M: You can have it, here. Right here. Here's what you need to do. See? Can you do it?
Em: Umm . . hum, yeah, yeah.
M: You can stand just where Mommy stands and dig up.
Em: Mommy I got it all done.
M: Okay, chop it all up.
Em: Cop, chop! I can chop very well.
M: Umm . . hum . .
Em: Uh, uh, I . . I . . Mommy, I saw something!
M: What did you see?
Em: I see . . a snake! I saw a I saw a snake, but I didn't see it right now. (Emily saw a worm.)
M: We might see one (meaning a real snake).
Em: Yes we might find one. I call worms snakes.
(Emily and Mother continue to plant lettuce and bean seeds, but Emily comes back to the "snakes.")
Em: Where is some snakes?
M: I don't know. Let's turn over some dirt to see if we can find some.
Emily, I just don't see any worms tonight. Usually we see lots of them, but . . .
Em: But . . . morning; what's morning?
M: No, it's evening.
Em: It . . evening? I hope it's morning.
M: Why do you hope it's morning? What's that? See that little worm there?
Em: That's a caterpillar; that's a snake; it's a snake; ah, a snake; it's a snake, that's a snake . . .
M: What's he doing?
Em: He's doing fine. I guess I'll keep him. I'll put him in my birdcage.

Talk in this instance is very much a part of the seed planting activity. The mother's talk structures the task and gives Emily instructions about how to dig and plant the seeds. At the same time, she pays attention to Emily's interests and responds—to her desire to use the trowel and her interest in worms. They take turns; both give new information and respond to that given by the other. Emily makes sure her mother understands that she calls worms "snakes." She initiates talk and introduces new topics. Her mother, while getting on with the planting, attends to Emily's interests; she collaborates by acknowledging Emily's contributions and offering new information, or asking Emily for more information ("Why do you hope it's morning?"). Through the questions and information, the mother sustains the talk and the task; she provides a *scaffold*, to use Bruner's (1975) term, that supports and encourages the talk. Together, they construct a conversational "text" that is coherent within itself, and at the same time, contributes to Emily's developing system of language and meaning.

Vygotsky (1962; 1978) recognized the importance of this kind of social interaction in learning and discussed the vital role adults play in children's language and conceptual learning. He viewed learning as a collaborative enterprise in which an adult enters into a dialogue with a child in a way that enables the child to deal with a situation, or solve a problem, that he or she is not yet able to manage alone. The adult provides essential conditions and directions to the novice on the basis of his or her estimate of the child's potential for success in the task; the child responds in terms of his or her ability to sense the value of the adult's help, even before he or she is fully aware of its significance in fulfilling the task. Vygotsky refers to this difference between what the child can do independently and what he or she can do in collaboration with an adult as the "zone of proximal development." To Vygotsky, " 'good learning' is always that which is in advance of development" (1978, p. 89). He believed that "learning creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate *only when the child is interacting with people in his or her environment and in cooperation with his peers*" (italics added) (p. 90).

It is a daunting task teachers face when they seek to relate to 30 or more children in a way that "awakens" their common and individual developmental processes. Many, feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation—the number of students, the diversity of their backgrounds and aspirations, the expectations of the community, and the set curriculum—turn aside and attend to the prescribed course of study. Unable to cope with the learning needs of all children, they try to provide for what they perceive to be the common need. They focus on subject matter and address groups of pupils. As they do so, their talk becomes increasingly formal and impersonal and less appealing and meaningful to the students who are confronted with concepts and language they don't understand. Regrettably, those who suffer most from this kind of abstract school talk are the children who can least afford it—those whose language and culture differs most from what the school offers.

On the other hand, many creative teachers have found ways to bring successful learning to a wider range of children. They have acted to bring children's out-of-school lives into the classroom, to foster collaborative work, and to share the power and responsibility of the classroom.

Enlarging the Learning Environment

A first step is to open up the learning environment to include the world pupils know. I recently visited a small school in a farming community where the children and their teachers had bought and sold a pig to finance the visit of a poet to their school. The children, fifth and sixth graders who knew about pigs and their profit potential, arranged with a local slaughterhouse to have their pig butchered and made into sausage which they then sold to raise funds to support the poet! The children were committed to the project because it arose from familiar ground and the community enthusiastically supported the venture because they saw the school as recognizing and valuing an enterprise which was very much a part of the local economic life. The greatest outcome perhaps was the fact that the pupils felt a personal ownership of the poet's visit.

Increasingly teachers are finding a place in the curriculum for children's personal experiences and spontaneous stories. Rosen (1982) recently described how a teacher in an East London dockland secondary school devised a system for basing much of his work in English on oral story telling. The pupils and sometimes other members of the community are invited to tell stories to audiences in school. These are recorded on tape and then reworked and transposed into written form, made into booklets, and re-recorded into audio-taped programs or video presentations. The activities are many-layered, Rosen notes, reaching out into the community when the pupils retell the stories of their parents and grandparents.

Other teachers, from first grade to the university, are using dialogue journals to discover what students are thinking, feeling, or concerned about in their personal lives or classroom work. Students write in their journals regularly and the teacher responds to *what* the writer has said. The writer then replies and expands the topic or selects another and so the dialogue continues. The purpose is to increase the interaction between teacher and student and to get children to write something *they* want to say. One teacher described the development of a text in a journal as "like talking on the telephone" (Horowitz, 1983). Another emphasized the benefits of getting immediate response to classwork and developing a common bond of understanding and trust between herself and the students. Apparently, she had found a way into the "developmental processes." She said:

> I always know what's going on in their thinking and their lives that might affect their work, and I know who's *ready* for learning so I can suggest new assignments.

New Patterns of Relationships

When pupils contribute more to the content of the learning environment, new relationships are formed between themselves and their teachers and peers. In many instances children learn more when they can work together. Admittedly, there are problems when children aren't accustomed to working together, but cooperation increases as they find such arrangements help them to get things done that might be difficult, time consuming, or boring to do on their own. Filling in pages in workbooks or writing the monthly book report might be more appealing and foster more learning if they could be done occasionally in collaboration with another person. Relationships between students change depending on the task, who is involved, and the particular competence of each participant.

Skill in writing flourishes when children are permitted to work together. One second grader, whom I observed over a three year period, had a real struggle learning to write and avoided it whenever possible. One day the teacher suggested he join another boy to make a board game based on a book they both knew and liked. His friend, though far from an accomplished writer either, was slightly better than Tim. The task required that they lay out the path of the game and write rules. The task was well-structured, the writing, while requiring some precision, was brief and the boys thoroughly enjoyed writing interesting rewards and troublesome penalties for future players. After finding some success in this rather limited writing task, Tim went on to write stories with other friends, and eventually was able to write his own, fairly long stories.

Another time, the same teacher[2] who was then working with third and fourth graders, organized the entire class into groups of three to study giants as they are portrayed in well-known folk tales. Each group was assigned three or four different versions of one tale, such as the Fin M'Coul stories, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and the Little Tailor stories (see, for example, DePaola, 1981; Galdone, 1982; Manning-Sanders, 1963; San Souci, 1981; Still, 1977). They read the stories, discussed special features, and compared likenesses and differences. Sometimes one child read aloud to the others. At the teacher's suggestion, they paid attention to story settings, beginnings and endings, characters, and special symbols, trials, and magic elements that different authors use. They organized their findings on large charts around these categories, and further represented their new knowledge in art, drama, and writing. Three boys who studied the "Little Tailor" stories each wrote a brief piece comparing the books. Although the content of their writing was similar, each piece reflected individual style and writing skills. A snippet from one text follows:

> I found differences in the illustrations. SanSuci uses light water color painting while Carle uses dark color collage. SanSuci's giants look like they could be your grandparents because of his friendly faces but Carle's bloody ogres aren't friendly at all.

The children entered the project with vastly different knowledge of folktales or interest in them; but by working together and talking among themselves and their teacher, all were able to extend their knowledge and enjoyment of the stories, even those who had the greatest knowledge in the beginning. Those whose sense of story was still fragile had the opportunity to develop it through the support of their peers and the guidance of their teacher.

The teacher's role in the project was crucial, but unobtrusive. She provided the materials and structured the learning situation. When the work was underway, she listened to the children's problems and plans and collaborated with them in solving problems, in developing products, and finding different audiences to receive their knowledge and enthusiasm. The way she collected and organized the books, raised questions with the children, and supplied needed information provided a secure but flexible *scaffold* on which they could construct and reconstruct literature concepts and literacy skills.

Changes in Language Use

When teachers open the classroom to include content and interpersonal relationships that are more meaningful to students, the modes of language use change. There is more discussing and less lecturing, more planning and less directing, and more tentativeness and fewer pronouncements. Some teachers have found that by simply using a fresh mode for exploring a topic (such as storytelling or journal writing, as in the illustrations above), children will attain greater meaning. One mode that merits special attention is drama, a powerful medium for gaining access to the many difficult concepts embedded in textbooks. Drama is perceived here, not as performing a play or retelling a story, but in Heathcote's view of human beings confronted by a situation which changes them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges (Wagner, 1976).

Drama can help children to understand distant times and places, the work of a historian, or the troubles of a governor or ancient king. Children who worked in groups as an early 19th century "family" in Massachusetts, compiling a list of supplies and personal belongings to take with them on the long journey to the new Ohio Country, will get to know that important period in our social history in a detailed and personal way. Whenever a given mode of language becomes the starting point for a learning event, the personal relationships in the class and the content being studied change according to the constraints of the form of language used.

Summary

Helping greater numbers of children find meaning and success in school requires first that teachers understand how meanings are formed, why they sometimes are so difficult to communicate, and the crucial role language plays in both the formation and the sharing of meaning. In addition to these insights, teachers need to be aware of the techniques they can use to accomplish the task. Among the variables which teachers control and can manipulate to enrich the learning opportunities for their pupils are (a) the learning environment and content to be studied, (b) the human relationships and (c) the modes of representation and communication.

Notes

1. Mary Kay Holt gave me permission to use this conversation with Emily.
2. I am grateful to Marlene Harbert, Barrington School, Upper Arlington, Ohio, for this example.

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S. Jay Samuels

Factors Influencing Listening: Inside and Outside the Head

Comprehending spoken language is a complex process in which the listener constructs a meaning out of the information provided by the speaker. Constructing meaning out of the speaker's message depends on the knowledge and skills in the listener's head and on environmental factors which are external to the listener. Failure to comprehend may result from two interacting sources, lack of inside-the-head knowledge on the part of the listener or outside-the-head factors such as poor communication skills on the part of the speaker.

Table 1, which outlines factors influencing listening comprehension, suggests a useful framework to assist diagnostic decision making. The importance of examining this range of factors has been underscored by a recent study of the accuracy of diagnostic decision making by reading experts. The study revealed a shocking lack of reliability of diagnosis by reading experts (Vinsonhaler, Weinshank, Wagner, & Polin, 1983). When, however, undergraduate students were trained to use a framework similar to the one presented in Table 1, the undergraduates were superior to the experts in the reliability of diagnostic decision making.

The framework is useful because it forces one to consider the numerous interacting factors which influence the comprehension of language. The listening comprehension process is *interactive* in that it involves reconstructing the intended spoken message by translating its lexical and grammatical information into meaning units that can be combined with the listener's knowledge and cognitive structures. To the extent that there is a good match between the knowledge structures of the listener and speaker, the message may be accurately reconstructed; to the extent that the match is poor, there will be inaccuracy in the reconstruction. On practical grounds, knowing the range of factors influencing listening can guide the search for potential trouble spots when there is a breakdown in comprehension. Also, knowledge of the range of factors involved in listening comprehension can serve as a blueprint to speakers who wish to improve the effectiveness of their presentations.

Inside-the-Head Factors

Intelligence

If a student is having trouble with listening comprehension, one of the first questions generally asked is, is the student's level of intellectual functioning sufficient for the task? Except for a very small percentage of the population, most students have the necessary level of functioning to make sense of what the speaker is saying, providing the topic is one which is familiar to them. In *Biological Foundations of Language*, Lenneberg (1967, p. 311) states, "If we take a population whose IQ is at or just above threshold. . .intelligence figures correlate quite poorly with language development. Only if we confine our observations to the low grades of feeblemindedness can a relationship between intelligence and language learning be established." Below an IQ level of 20, it is doubtful if meaningful

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Table 1
Factors Influencing Language Comprehension

Inside-the-head factors

1. Intelligence
   - Does the listener have the intelligence to comprehend language?
2. Language Facility
   - Accuracy and Automaticity: Is the listener accurate and automatic in the recognition of words, and in the ability to segment and parse the speech stream into morpheme and syntactic units?
   - Vocabulary: Does the listener have an extensive vocabulary? Does the listener know the variety of ways in which a word can be used?
   - Syntax: Can the listener take embedded sentences and parse them into understandable units? Is the listener able to make the inferences necessary to comprehend the eliptical sentences commonly used in casual conversation?
   - Dialect and Idiolect: If a dialect is spoken which is different from the listener's, can the listener understand it?
   - Anaphoric Terms: Can the listener identify the referent for the anaphoric terms used?
3. Background Knowledge and Schema
   - Does the listener have the necessary background knowledge to understand the topic?
   - Can the listener make appropriate inferences?
4. Speech Registers and Awareness of Contextual Influences
   - Is the listener aware of the different styles of speech used for different contexts?
   - Can the listener identify the status of the speaker in order to interact appropriately?
5. Metacognitive Strategies
   - Is the listener aware of when there is a breakdown in comprehension? Is the listener aware of how and when it is appropriate to request additional information or clarification from a speaker?
   - Can the listener summarize the major points made during a conversation or lecture?
6. Kinesics
   - Can the listener understand the nonverbal signals used in spoken communication?
7. Motivation
   - Is the listener sufficiently interested to focus attention and to interact appropriately on what the speaker is saying?

Outside-the-head factors

1. Discussion Topic
   - Is the topic one which the listener has sufficient background to understand?
2. Speaker Awareness of Audience Needs
   - Has the speaker correctly judged the level of background knowledge of the listener? Is there an appropriate match between information presented by the speaker and the listener's background knowledge? Does the speaker make appropriate adjustments for the listener's background in terms of examples given, rate, and pacing of information presented? Does the speaker present too much information?
   - Is the speaker aware of the need to modulate the loudness of the voice according to the distance between the speaker, the listener, and acoustic properties of the room?
   - Is the vocabulary appropriate?
   - Is the sentence structure too complex for the listener?
3. Clarity and Speaker Effectiveness
   - Does the speaker use too many anaphoric terms? Is the referent clearly indicated for these terms?
   - Does the speaker shift topic without indicating there has been a shift?
   - Does the message lack cohesive ties and causal links?
   - Does the speaker indicate in formal presentations the goals and objectives of presentation, the major thesis, the supporting ideas? Is the presentation well structured? Are there summaries, reviews, questions from the speaker to the listeners?
   - Does the speaker use pitch, stress, and pauses appropriately?
4. Context
   - Are there contextual cues present which support what the speaker is saying?

speech or comprehension will take place, and above an IQ level of 50, fully established language has been observed. Thus, for students with IQ levels above 50, meaningful comprehension of spoken language should occur, providing the topic is familiar.

One consideration should be kept in mind in teaching slow learners, and that is the pacing of instruction. If the pacing is too fast, slow learners often become discouraged and stop paying attention. In order to maintain motivation and time-on-task, the pacing should be slower and there is greater need for review. Although the slow learner may take longer to acquire mastery, once the material has been mastered, there is often little difference between the faster learner and the slower learner in their memory for the information (Shuell, 1972). The implication from Shuell's study is that given enough time, the slow learner will be able to comprehend and recall the information taught in school, especially if the content is interesting and they consider it important.

Language Facility

Accuracy and Automaticity. When listening to spoken language, the ability to segment and analyze speech accurately and automatically into appropriate morpheme[1] and syntactic units is essential. To illustrate the importance of accurate and automatic segmentation of what we hear into appropriate units, one need only recall how difficult it is to understand a spoken foreign language when we have to use so much attention trying to identify the words and phrases that the message and meaning get lost. The reason for the loss of the message when we cannot segment automatically is that the amount of attention each individual has for information processing at any given moment is limited. For listening comprehension to occur, numerous cognitive tasks must take place in a brief period of time and they all require attention. Some of the processes use small amounts of attention while others require larger amounts. These activities which require attention include segmenting what we hear into morpheme and syntactic units, holding idea units in memory, identifying anaphoric terms, finding the referent for these terms, and integrating information from the speaker with knowledge stored in the memory of the listener.

Since the amount of attention the listener has is limited, it is essential for the sake of efficiency to have as many of the sub-tasks listed above performed with as little attention as possible. In fact, automaticity can be conceptualized as the ease with which a task can be performed. When a task can be done with ease, little attention is required. Thus, the reason we want the segmenting to be done accurately and automatically is that it does not draw too heavily upon the limited attention capacity of the individual. Whatever attention capacity remains after the segmenting tasks have been completed can be used for the other tasks necessary for understanding the message.

Vocabulary. Another requirement for good listening comprehension is knowledge of the vocabulary used by the speaker. A problem many students have, of which adults seem to be unaware, has to do with the multiple meanings of words and the fact that many students know only the most common meaning of a word. When the word is encountered in one of its less common uses, students are confused. This can be illustrated with a sentence in which a word appears several times, each time with a different meaning. Admittedly, the following sentence is not one we would care to encounter again, but it does make sense, providing all the uses of the word *bank* are known: "You can bank on me to meet you at the river bank after I put some money in the bank."

In a second example, imagine the problem for a student who only knows the first meaning for the word *bore*, as in "the drill bored a hole in the wall," when the student encounters the following sentence: "The talk bored the audience." The student must imagine that the speaker is using pointed remarks. About this problem, Mason, Kniseley and Kendall (1979) state: "Knowledge of words. . .has at least three instructional aspects: learning a meaning of a word, learning more than one meaning, and learning how to choose the contextually supported meaning." The latter two categories create the most difficulty for children.

Syntax: Embedding and Elipses. There are still other requirements for good listening comprehension. One of these is the ability to segment complex embedded sentences into more basic syntactic units. In order to understand the complex sentence, "The police officer found the money that belonged to Smith," it must be segmented into: (a) The police officer found the money, and (b) The money belonged to Smith.

Another example involves the farmer in the children's story who, in an effort to get a cow to jump over the fence, starts a chain of events which ends with "This is the farmer who yelled at his dog who bit the donkey who kicked the cow who then jumped over the fence." In order to understand this embedded chain, the listener must segment the chain into: The farmer yelled at the dog; the dog then bit the donkey; the donkey then kicked the cow; the cow then jumped over the fence. If the listener cannot parse the complex sentences into their constituents, comprehension will suffer. What is not clear at the present time is how much difficulty poor comprehenders have with this type of task.

While the cognitive task of making sense of embedded sentences requires analysis of the complex utterances into more basic units, the listener must also know how to add the missing elements in incomplete eliptical sentences. For example, normal conversation is characterized by the frequent use of eliptical sentences as illustrated in the following dialogue: Teacher: "What time will you arrive tomorrow?" Student: "Seven o'clock." In another example, a child is looking for a lost toy. The mother points under the couch and says, "Here!" The child looks, finds the toy and says, "Thanks." In order to make sense of the eliptical statements, one must use the entire context of the situation as well as the previous utterances.

Dialect and Idiolect. Sometimes the language of a speech community differs enough from the listener's language in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary to be considered a distinct type but not a different language. The existence of such differences places additional demands on the listener's processing which can severely interfere with comprehension.

Anaphoric Terms. An anaphoric term is a word used as a substitute for a preceding word or group of words, such as *it* in "I know it and he does, too" or *them* in "John and Mary need help. Please, help them." A common source of difficulty for many students is identifying the referent for an anaphoric term (Pearson and Johnson, 1978, p. 22). Sentences such as the following are confusing to many students:

- Mary gave Sue a T-shirt. *She* thanked *her* for *it*.
- Sue dunked John's cards in the water. Because it made *him* cry, *she* apologized to *him* for doing *it*.
- Because Fred did not bake a cake for Mary's birthday, John did "o" [the "o" symbol indicates there is an implied anaphoric term that refers to the fact that John baked a cake]. She could not eat *it* though because *it* was chocolate.

Background Knowledge

Background knowledge about a topic is one of the more important variables that can influence listening. If, for example, the student is automatic at the listening sub-tasks which have been listed and comprehension is poor, lack of knowledge is a possible cause. In order to test if poor comprehension is due, in part, to lack of necessary background, one simply has to have the student listen to a message on a topic with which the student seems familiar. If comprehension is good on the familiar topic, one may assume that lack of necessary background information accounted for the poor comprehension on the other topic.

Another way to test if the student lacks background knowledge is to ask inferential questions requiring inferential response. Inability to answer these may indicate poor background knowledge. An analysis of where the breakdown in comprehension occurs may reveal that there is adequate literal comprehension but inadequate inferential comprehension. To determine a student's comprehension of a sentence such as "Mother cooked breakfast for John," an educator may ask literal comprehension questions such as, "Who cooked breakfast?" "For whom was breakfast cooked?" "What did mother cook?" Or the educator may ask inferential comprehension questions such as, "What foods did mother cook?" "Where did mother do the cooking?" and "What utensils did mother use?" In order to answer the inferential questions, the student must rely on knowledge of how foods are prepared, what one usually eats for breakfast, and where food preparation takes place. Responses to such inferential questions will indicate the state of the student's knowledge relative to that subject matter.

Speech Registers

A speech register is the style of language used in a particular social context. For example, in the classroom we may use a formal speech register to communicate, while on the school playground we may use an informal register. The style of speech used may vary depending on the perceptions of the participants—whether they view the situation as being serious or casual, formal or informal, high personal risk or low personal risk, and their notions of the status and power of the other people in the social context relative to their own power. Recent research indicates that what one comprehends and how much one comprehends is context bound and related to the registers used by the speakers (Mosenthal & Jin Na, 1980; Spiro, 1977).

For example, information presented in a graduate class by a well-known scholar using a formal speech register will be retained for a longer period of time than the same information presented in a cafeteria by a stranger using an informal register. The reason for this is the listener perceives the first situation as one in which the information is important and must be remembered for recall on future tests, whereas the second situation is perceived as one in which the information will be of no future use, and no attempt is made to retain the information. Mosenthal and Jin Na (1980) have demonstrated that in formal settings, recall is related to intellectual ability, but in informal settings, recall is related more to the verbal style, register, and pattern of interaction with the speaker. Thus, what and how much we comprehend is determined in part by the registers we use in communicating with each other

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies refer to self-monitoring and self-regulatory mechanisms used by an active problem solver who wishes to achieve a goal. The problem solver can be a speaker who wants to communicate an idea or a listener who wishes to understand a message. Highly complex operations such as communication require an overall awareness and strategies to ensure that the goals are being met. It is as if the communicator asks him/herself: Why am I engaged in this interaction? Is this information important? What are the major and minor points being made? When the speaker is unclear, do I know appropriate ways to request clarification? When the information is important, do I know techniques for improving recall? Do I know how to negotiate meaning, alternating the role of the listener and speaker in a manner appropriate for the control and status of the speaker? Finally, can I identify the structure of the message (if there is one) as an aid to comprehension and recall?

Investigations by Garner (1983) on metacognitive strategies and by Taylor and Samuels (1983) on ability to identify the structure used in discourse distinguish good from poor comprehenders. What is even more important, these strategies can be taught, resulting in an improvement in comprehension.

Kinesics

The nonverbal signals sent by a speaker, the facial expressions, eye-contact and direction of gaze, hand gestures, and body motions all convey meaning and are part of the context in which communication occurs. These forms of nonverbal communication are part of the message and may provide important information about how the speaker is feeling. For example a speaker may say he has great confidence in himself, while the slumped posture, the avoidance of eye contact, and the clasping and unclasping of hands may suggest a discrepancy between what the speaker says and the way he actually feels.

In classrooms as well as social situations, such as cocktail parties, the nonverbal forms of communication serve a function which is at least as important as the verbal forms. For example, when the duration of eye contact extends beyond some norm, it is a powerful signal that an approach would meet with approval. Similarly, one's posture and prolonged direction of gaze away from the speaker may indicate that the listener is bored with the speaker. While these nonverbal signals vary so much from individual to individual that they are often hard to interpret, those who are sensitive to them have an advantage.

Motivation

Principles of learning and cognition state that without motivation and attention to a task, learning does not occur and comprehension is impeded. Motivation has several functions. As noted earlier, skilled listening comprehension is a complex activity requiring the simultaneous coordination of numerous sub-skills. The low level skills become automatic through practice and require less attention for their execution. However, during the early learning stages before automaticity is reached, these skills require considerable amounts of attention, and it is during this early stage of learning that the task is difficult and motivation is required. Thus, one important function of motivation is that during the difficult stage of learning, it provides the energy for directing attention to the task to be learned. The basic reason for wanting the low level tasks to become automatic is that attention is required by the high level tasks, such as integrating information the speaker is presenting with information in memory and evaluating the information. High level tasks do not become automatic; consequently, motivation and attention are always required for comprehension. This use of attention in higher level processing brings us to the second function of motivation: It is the driving force which directs the listener's attention in the direction of the speaker and then aids in the processing of the information.

Outside-the-Head Factors

Discussion Topic

Listening comprehension may be thought of as an interactive process in which the listener's knowledge is used to make sense of information provided by the speaker. The ability to understand and to construct meaning out of what a speaker is saying is determined, in part, by the listener's prior knowledge. Unfortunately, however, there are a number of reasons why comprehension may be poor even when the listener has the necessary knowledge to understand the speaker. These include inability to apply information to a new situation, lack of motivation, and failure to use appropriate metacognitive listening strategies. The speaker must help the listener bridge the gap between what is known and the new situation. Illustrations and analogies, for example, may be used to help the listener transfer the knowledge from one context to another (Pearson & Johnson, 1978).

Another reason for poor comprehension is that the listener may not be paying attention to the speaker. Finally, when a message contains more information than can be stored easily in memory or when the message is not well presented, special listening skills and extra effort are required to understand and recall this information. The listener may either not possess the skills or may not use them. Thus, even when the listener has the necessary background knowledge to understand the speaker, there may be poor comprehension.

Speaker Awareness of Listener Needs

To communicate effectively, the speaker should be aware of listener needs and the factors which influence comprehension, including the amount of information a listener has on a topic, the educational and intellectual level of the listener, the listener's interest in the discussion topic, and momentary fluctuations in attention. For example, it is useful for the speaker to know the extent of the listener's background information on a topic. If the level of knowledge is inadequate, it may be necessary to provide the missing information. On the other hand, if the listener is familiar with a topic, the speaker need not cover all the basic points because any gaps can be filled in by inferences derived from the listener's knowledge.

Being aware of the listener's educational and intellectual level helps the speaker decide on the type of vocabulary and syntax to use, as well as the rate of information presentation. If these are inappropriate for the needs of the listener, comprehension will suffer. As mentioned previously, the low IQ individual can master complex tasks providing the rate of information presentation is slow enough and there are opportunities for review and rehearsal.

By knowing if a listener is motivated and interested in a topic, the speaker is able to make various types of adjustments in a presentation. For example, when the listener is not interested in a topic, the speaker may have to devote a considerable portion of time to convincing the listener that the topic is important and worthy of attention. If, on the other hand, the listener is already interested, the time may be spent in other ways. By being sensitive to the nonverbal signals of the listener, the speaker can estimate when there are lapses in listener attention and the speaker can make the necessary adjustments to recapture the attention of the listener.

Finally, the speaker's sensitivity to the acoustic characteristics of the space where the talk or discussion is taking place also influences comprehension. Depending on the characteristics of the space, the speaker may have to adjust voice loudness to accommodate the needs of the listener.

Clarity of the Message

The speaker controls numerous factors which influence the clarity and recall of a message. In formal and often in informal talks, it is helpful to the audience if the speaker clearly indicates the underlying goal and the major supporting arguments and evidence. If these devices are omitted, the listener is left to infer what these elements may be, and the listener may be incorrect in making the required inferences. When the talk is in a classroom setting, devices such as summaries, reviews, and questions by the speaker can facilitate comprehension and recall.

According to Pearson and Johnson (1978), the use of anaphoric terms poses one of the most difficult problems for comprehending a message, because to understand the anaphoric term, one must locate its referent. While this task is difficult enough in reading, it is far more difficult in a listening situation. When reading, one can go back in the text to locate the referent. When listening, however, what does one go back to? In some situations the speaker can be asked, but in many situations this strategy may be inappropriate.

There are still other reasons why under certain conditions comprehending a text is easier than comprehending spontaneous spoken language. Except for some formal presentations, a written text usually has had more planning and revision than a speech event. A well written text has a structure and cohesive ties which bind the various parts together—features often lacking in the ebb and flow of conversation, or even in a lecture given in class.

On the other hand, two factors work in favor of spoken over written language. The first is that the face-to-face interactive nature of conversation makes it possible for speakers and listeners to actively negotiate meaning. In informal situations, when the listener has difficulty understanding, the speaker may be asked to clarify. Listeners and speakers take turns, build on each others' statements and ideas, and create their own set of meanings as they converse.

The second factor has to do with the fact that with speech, the speaker can modulate what is being said by varying pitch, stress, and pauses between words and phrases. These cues can add richness and interest to what the speaker is saying, although unfortunately there are speakers who do not use them, speaking instead in a dull monotone. While these cues are easily expressed in speech, they are poorly represented in texts (Schreiber, 1980), a factor which adds to the difficulty of learning to read.

Context

In general, when the environment contains the objects to which the speaker is referring, comprehension is facilitated. For example, the speaker can help the listener understand the sentence, "Give it to him," by pointing to the individual referred to as "him." Similarly, as G. Siegel (personal communication, July 1983) has stated, when working with children who have speech and comprehension difficulties, the test examiner should work with the child in two environments, one in which there are environmental supports for the message and the other in a decontextualized setting, in order to find out the extent to which the child needs contextual supports to understand what is said. Finally, as Spiro (1980) has stated, the context in which an event occurs may indicate if what is learned is important and to be remembered or whether it should be expunged from memory as soon as possible.

Summary

A range of factors, both inside and outside the head, influence listening comprehension. Reflecting on those factors and using awareness of them to analyze the communication situations we see in schools and classrooms is an important step in diagnosing possible causes for poor listening comprehension. Indeed, poor comprehension is usually related to many factors other than the student's ability. This view of diagnosis should help educators to look broadly at situations and to seek solutions which are related to causes of poor comprehension and which have promise for improving comprehension.

Note

1. A morpheme is a linguistic unit that cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts; e.g., words such as *jump* or word elements such as *ed*, as in jump*ed*

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Learning to Talk and Talking to Learn

The relationship between thought and word—between thinking on the one hand and speaking and listening on the other—has preoccupied philosophers for centuries. As long as it is conceived of in terms of connections in the minds of isolated individuals, it will probably continue to defy resolution. In practice, however, human beings do not live in a social vacuum. Their thoughts and words arise largely in contexts of collaborative activity where the predominant aim is to synchronize perspectives and to achieve a sharing of information and attitudes toward a common goal.

From this social perspective, of even greater importance than the relationship between thought and word in the mind of the individual is the way in which two or more individuals achieve a mutual understanding of thoughts and feelings in the pursuit of shared enterprises. Hence the importance of the theoretical study of conversation—the means whereby, through linguistic interaction, this coordination of minds is attempted and sometimes achieved.

However, the study of linguistic interaction extends beyond theoretical importance. For those of us responsible for the care and education of young children, it is also a matter of very practical importance. Our efforts to facilitate the development of children's understanding of the world in which they live and their power to control it are largely accomplished through linguistic interaction. Different styles of interaction provide quite different opportunities for learning, some more effective than others. How adults talk with children is thus a matter of great practical as well as theoretical importance.

In this article we shall try to show why this is so and to offer some suggestions as to how teachers can interact most effectively with their pupils. But first it is necessary to provide a brief description of the research on which the preceding claims are based.

The Study of Language at Home and at School

The Bristol Study of Language Development was initially conceived as an investigation of the acquisition of English as a first language in the preschool years. From a random sample of over 1000 children, 128 were selected to give equal representation to both sexes, to the four seasons of the year for birth date, and to social background, based on the education and occupation of both parents. Children with any known handicap were omitted, as were those in full-time care and those whose parents did not speak English as their first language. Half the children were aged 15 months at the time of the first observation and the other half 39 months.[1]

For the next 2½ years observations were made in the children's homes at three monthly intervals using radio-microphones and a pre-programmed recording device that obviated the need for a re-

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searcher to be present. Eighteen 90-second samples were recorded on each occasion and contextual information was obtained in the evening by playing back the recording to the parents and questioning them about the location, activity, and participants in each of the recorded samples. In this way, we were able to record genuine spontaneous conversation in the full range of contexts that occur in children's everyday life at home.

Transcripts were made of the recordings and these were submitted to a comprehensive linguistic analysis which has yielded strong evidence of a common pattern of development, despite wide differences in the rate at which this proceeded. No significant differences were found between the development of boys and girls and there was little evidence of a systematic relationship between rate of development and social background except for the small minority of extremely fast and extremely slow children.[2] However, as will be described below, there was a significant relationship between rate of development and the quality of linguistic interaction which the children experienced.

Since its beginning in 1973, the study has developed in a number of directions. The relationship between pre-school language development and school achievement had been a subject of major theoretical concern during the 1960s and early 1970s on both sides of the Atlantic, and major policy decisions on Head Start in the United States and on "Educational Priority Areas" in Britain had been based largely on theories about "linguistic disadvantage." These theories, however, were unsupported by adequate empirical evidence, for there had been no longitudinal studies of the role of language in the transition from home to school. When the opportunity arose to extend our investigation, therefore, we were pleased to do so and, since 1977, we have continued to follow the educational careers of 32 of the younger half of our original sample. At the time of writing, these children were 11 years old, and we have completed a comprehensive assessment of their attainment at the end of the primary phase of their education.

During the intervening years we have assessed them a number of times and found a strong correlation between their pre-school language development and their success in school. In particular, we have found that differences in "knowledge of literacy" at the time of school entry most significantly predict their later success. These differences, in turn, are related to the frequency with which they had stories read to them in the early years (see Wells, 1982; in press-b).

For our present purposes, however, our concern is the continued observations of spontaneous linguistic interaction both at home just before entry to school at 5 years of age and, subsequently, during the first two years at school. From these and earlier observations in the children's homes we draw the evidence for the arguments we wish to develop for the importance of quality of linguistic interaction.

Talking and Learning at Home

As we survey the evidence from our observations of language in the home, two perspectives may be adopted. On the one hand, we may focus on the children, measuring the development of their abilities, identifying the sequences in which they build their linguistic resources, and noting the areas in which they succeed or have difficulties at successive stages. On the other hand we may focus upon the conversational strategies employed by the adults with whom they most frequently interact, seeking to understand how their behavior facilitates or impedes the children's participation in conversation on particular occasions and thus, over time, influences the course of their development. The emphasis in all but the most recent research has been on the first perspective. However, since learning takes place through interaction and, as suggested above, this is necessarily a collaborative enterprise, it is equally important to adopt the second perspective as well.

Let us begin with the children. Here the evidence of other researchers (see, for example, papers in Deutsch, 1981, and Wanner & Gleitman, 1982), along with our own observational study, confirms that children are extremely active and persistent learners. In all their interactions with the external world they are compulsive and creative seekers after meaning. With what frequently seems like unbounded energy, they investigate and explore their environment, absorbing messages through all their senses, assimilating new information to existing schemata, and accommodating their schemata to improve the fit, impelled by a drive to understand the world and make it their own.

Language enters into this early learning in two important ways. First, as children interact with other people in a wide variety of activities, their experience of language in use provides them with evidence from which they construct their own representation of the language system. Second, as others talk with them in the course of shared activities, they provide relevant information which the children incorporate into their developing inner representations of the non-linguistic world.

The opportunity for both kinds of learning can e seen in the following extract from a recording of a two-year-old with his mother:

Mark: /ɛəæ/[3] (=look at that).
Birds, Mummy.
Mother: Mm.
Mark: Jubs (= birds).
Mother: What are they doing?
Mark: Jubs bread.
Mother: Oh look.
They're eating the berries aren't they?
Mark: Yeh.
Mother: That's their food.
They have berries for dinner.
Mark: Oh.

As can be seen from the example, it is important to consider the second perspective, that of the role played by the adult. Although the responsibility for what is learned rests with the child—only he can construct his inner representations—the opportunities and motivation for his learning can be significantly increased by an adult, who contributes to conversations with him in ways that extend the child's meaning and take into account his point of view.

Adult and child will not always have the same purposes, of course, nor will they always immediately achieve mutual understanding. In such circumstances there are particularly rich opportunities for the child to learn, as meanings are clarified and intentions explained and justified. The following example shows how such a situation, arising from a joint activity, can give rise to opportunities for the child to learn both about the social and physical world and the language in and through which that world is described and circumscribed:

Jonathan, aged 3½, is helping his mother with the housework, by polishing his wardrobe.

J: Do you think this is lovely?
M: I think it's a bit smeary.
J: Why do you think it's bit smeary?
M: Because you put far too much polish on.
M: Right, now you can put the things back on there (on the dresser) and I'll put the carpet-sweeper over the room.
J: Well why can't I put the carpet-sweeper over the room?
M: Because that's my job. OK?
J: What is my job?
M: You've done your job. You've polished the furniture.
J: It doesn't matter if that polish goes in your eyes does it?
M: Oh it does yes. It makes them sting.
J: *[4]
M: It makes them sting very badly.
J: Well, just now some of that polish waved in my eye.
M: Did it?
J: Yes.
M: Do they sting? Or did it miss? Don't rub them with the duster, darling.
The duster's all dirty.
J: Well how can that get out, Mummy? (referring to polish)
M: Why don't you go and wipe it with the flannel in the bathroom.
(J goes to bathroom.)
J: No, I think I'll get it out with the towel.
Mummy, I just have to see if I can get it out with this towel.
M: All right.

In this early spontaneous learning, then, the adult's role is essentially one of sustaining and extending the child's initiatives. The adult further provides a resource of knowledge and skill on which the child can draw to resolve questions and problems that arise from the activities.

There are, of course, differences between homes in the extent to which this sort of collaborative talk is the norm, but in those which we observed, the differences were of degree rather than of kind. Generally speaking, therefore, it can be said that in the majority of homes for at least some portion of the time, children experience a style of interaction which is characterized by collaboration in the negotiation of meaning and intention.

Talking and Learning at School

At home in the pre-school years, then, children's learning is self-motivated, spontaneous, and unstructured, supported by the kinds of interaction with adults that we have just described. On entry to school, however, they move into a different kind of social environment, one organized by trained adults to promote a broader and more systematic type of learning. What kinds of interaction take place in this new environment and what is the child's experience of language and learning in the classroom?

The importance of the relationship between language and learning has long been recognized by educators. The report of the Bullock Committee, *A Language for Life* (Bullock, 1975), which drew upon the research of the 1960s and early 1970s, gave official recognition to the important role of language across the curriculum. The teachers observed in our study subscribed to these views and placed "language development" high on their list of objectives. This was particularly emphasized by those teaching in schools where the children were predominantly of lower class parents, for one of the professed aims of such schools was to provide a rich linguistic environment that would compensate for the linguistic deprivation from which these children were believed to suffer. We might thus expect to find that the classrooms our children entered would be places where they had opportunities to exercise and increase their linguistic resources by using them in collaboration with the teachers and other children to explore ideas, tackle problems, exercise their imagination, and reflect upon their own and other people's experience to gain greater understanding of themselves and of their relationship with the world around them.

The observations we made in the classrooms enabled us to find out whether this was, in fact, the case. Furthermore, since the first classroom observation for each child was matched with an identical observation in the child's home just before entry to school, we were able to compare the language experienced at home and at school for each child and for the sample as a whole. In both settings, seven five-minute samples were analyzed, drawn from a pool of nine, made at 20 minute intervals between 9 a.m. and 12 noon.

As can be seen from Table 1, which presents the mean values for the sample as a whole for all adult-child talk in the two settings, the results of our analysis are clear-cut and, in the light of the ideals of the teachers, very disconcerting. Compared with their experiences at home, children at school were found to play a much less active role in conversation. They initiated fewer interactions, asked fewer questions, and took fewer turns per interaction. Their utterances were syntactically simpler, contained a narrower range of semantic content, and less frequently referred outside the here and now. Indeed almost half their utterances were elliptical or moodless sentence fragments, often being minimal responses to requests for display (e.g. "T: What do we call cats, sheep, and horses? C: Animals. T: That's right."). In contrast with their parents, these children's teachers dominated conversation, initiating the majority of interactions, predominantly through requests, questions, and requests for display. They were also more than

Table 1
Comparison of Adult-Child Conversation at Home and School (n=32)

	Home	School	Sig. level of difference
Absolute values			
Mean no. of child utterances to adults	122.0	45.0	p<.001
Mean no. of adult utterances to child	152.7	128.7	n.s.
Mean no. of child turns per interaction	4.1	2.5	p<.001
Mean child syntactic complexity	3.1	2.4	p<.001
Mean adult syntactic complexity	3.5	4.3	p<.001
Mean no. of categories of semantic content in child speech*	15.5	7.9	p<.001
Proportional values (child)			
Initiation of interaction	63.6%	23.0%	p<.001
Exchange-initiating utterances	70.2%	43.8%	p<.001
Complete statements	31.2%	28.0%	n.s.
Questions	12.7%	4.0%	p<.001
Requests	14.3%	10.4%	p<.05
Elliptical or moodless utterances	29.4%	49.4%	p<.001
Utterances in text-contingent exchanges	9.4%	6.3%	p<.10
References to non-present time	9.1%	6.4%	p<.05
Proportional values (adult)			
Exchange-initiating utterances	59.9%	78.7%	p<.001
Complete statements	26.2%	24.5%	n.s.
Questions	14.3%	20.2%	p<.01
Requests	22.5%	34.1%	p<.001
Elliptical utterances	5.7%	5.8%	n.s.
Requests for display	2.1%	14.2%	p<.001
Extending child's meaning	33.5%	17.1%	p<.001
Developing adult's meaning	19.3%	38.6%	p<.001

*For this comparison only, n = 16

twice as likely to develop their own meanings as they were to extend those contributed by the children, this ratio being almost the exact opposite of that found in the speech of the parents.[5]

In sum, like other researchers (see, for example, Tizard, Carmichael, Hughes, & Pinkerton, 1980), we found that the schools were not providing a linguistically rich environment able to provide compensation for those believed to be deprived at home. On the contrary, there were no homes that did not provide richer opportunities than the schools we observed for learning through talk with an adult. Clearly there is a mismatch here between teachers' aims and the reality of classroom practice. In the remainder of this paper we shall consider possible causes of this situation and practical steps teachers who share our belief in the value of talking for learning might take in order to turn theory into practice.

Classroom Problems and Possible Solutions

The first and most obvious cause of the impoverished talk between teacher and pupils is the number of children involved. A class of six- or seven-year-olds contains, on average, 30 children in the charge of one or at best two adults. All these children have to be occupied in tasks which will stimulate their interest and promote their learning. The demands on teachers in terms of management, safety, and control are therefore enormous; it is not surprising to find that as much as 44 percent of teacher talk is concerned with management tasks.[6] Added to this is the inexperience of children entering school for the first time. They have to learn to behave according to the norms of the classroom, to wait while others take their conversational turn, and to talk to the shared topic rather than changing the subject at will. Classroom talk thus suffers from organizational problems which militate against spontaneity and immediacy. The opportunities for extended adult-child interaction of the kind experienced at home, involving the more intellectual uses of language, can easily be submerged under the demands of the daily routine and the sheer number of children.

The second major contributory factor is, in our view, the curriculum itself. The expectations of parents and of society as a whole demand that certain facts be learned and skills mastered. There are norm-referenced tests and eventually public examinations. Teachers must demonstrate that, whatever methods they adopt, their pupils satisfy certain criteria of success. In the last decade there has additionally been the cry for a return to the basics in the (in our view mistaken) belief that informal methods of classroom management have led to a decline in standards.

Under these pressures many teachers, not surprisingly, may be inclined to adopt a more formal and didactic teaching style in order to ensure that all children "cover the curriculum." They may also accept curricular goals for learning which involve precisely worked-out sequences of activity through which all children must pass, neglecting the fact that children have different abilities and proceed at different rates. What is more, teachers who adopt a highly-structured curriculum, taught in a formally organized classroom with teacher and pupil roles clearly defined, seriously reduce the opportunities for the sort of open-ended, exploratory interaction between teacher and pupil that is generally agreed to be so valuable.

The third, and possibly the most serious, impediment is a less than whole-hearted belief in the value that pupil's talk has for their learning. Many of us have years of being *talked at* as students and have probably unconsciously absorbed the belief that, as teachers, we are not doing our job properly unless we are talking—telling, questioning, or evaluating. But all the time we are talking, we are stopping our pupils from trying out *their* understanding in words. We are also depriving ourselves of valuable information about the state of their understanding and thus of our opportunity to plan future work to meet their specific needs.

Thus we believe we must reassess our role as teachers, shifting our focus away from ourselves as instructors to a concern with children as learners, recognizing that our most important role is as facilitators of children's learning. Like the most effective parents (and many of us *are* parents) we must aim, in our interactions with our pupils, to provide what Bruner (1981) calls the "scaffolding" by means of which children climb from one stage of understanding to the next. We must aim to be collaborators with our pupils in the process of learning, rather than merely organizers of learning tasks and evaluators of the finished products. Above all, we must listen to and take seriously what children have to say as we talk with them about the tasks in which they are engaged.

To try to put into practice a genuine belief in the value of student talk is to undergo something of a conversion, for it often leads to a radical revision of our whole method of working. It is salutory to start by making a recording to monitor one's own talk in the classroom: What are the most frequently occurring topics; for what functions is language used (directing, informing, evaluating, etc.); what sorts of questions are asked, by whom, for what purpose, and in what contexts? Most teachers who submit themselves to this form of self-assessment find that they talk too much, repeat themselves unnecessarily, give children too short a time to respond, and ask too many questions which effectively reduce their pupils' opportunities for participation to the production—or lack of production—of predetermined minimal answers.

If, after analyzing a recording, it seems desirable to attempt to make some alterations to one's style, then a fruitful period of experimentation can take place, in which different strategies are tried and attention paid to the situations which most readily lead to genuine collaborative interaction. It may be possible to carry out this self-evaluation with other teachers: Perceptions shared with others may lead to practical suggestions for change, and the support of colleagues is always advantageous for morale.

Once teachers are firmly committed to the value of collaborative interaction in the classroom, they will note a change in their relationship with their pupils, who will begin to take more responsibility for the learning tasks in which they engage, particularly if collaboration extends to some degree of negotiation about the tasks and time-frame. Clearly, such an approach is not possible if all the children are required to work within the same tightly-structured curriculum framework. However, this constraint is removed when one concentrates on the process of learning rather than the product, and the benefits in terms of greater pupil motivation and involvement far outweigh the advantages of knowing that all pupils are working on the same task at the same time.

A natural extension of this method is to encourage collaboration among pupils. Where small groups are engaged on the same or related tasks they can give support to each other. This allows the teacher to spend longer periods of time with particular groups or individuals, helping them, through discussion, to think through what they are doing, evaluating progress, and suggesting future steps to enable them to continue on their own. In this way, some of the most serious difficulties of pupil numbers and control are avoided and, in addition, they are encouraged progressively to take more of the responsibility for their own learning.

As will be apparent, effective classroom organization is essential if teachers and pupils are to work in this way. Each teacher will have to work out the practical details in her or his own classroom, since every class of children and every classroom make different demands. However, since the basic principles remain the same, it may be helpful to mention some areas of classroom management that most teachers will find it important to consider.

1. Organization of space and furniture to allow freedom of movement and to reduce noise and friction among pupils. There should be distinct areas for different types of activity so that small groups can work together without disturbing each other. (Movable screens can be effective.)
2. Organization of resources and equipment to maximize pupils' independence, so that teacher involvement in the supply of materials, apparatus, etc., is kept to a minimum.
3. Organization of time so that during a day or week each pupil has engaged in a range of activities, while still having time to carry each activity through to a conclusion. (Some sort of log book kept by pupils can form the basis for the necessary negotiating of individual work.)
4. Organization of classroom volunteers, to allow maximum opportunity for sustained interaction between adults and children. (The value of parental help in the classroom is a matter of current debate. We believe there is sufficient positive evidence from research to justify continued exploration of ways in which parents can contribute to work in the classroom.)

Summary

The major responsibility of teachers is to facilitate the development of children's understanding of the world in which they live and their ability to function effectively as members of the society in which they are growing up. Children have much to learn and, since learning tends to be cumulative, they need to be helped to work systematically, reflecting upon what they already know and using existing knowledge as a bridgehead for the taking over of new knowledge and the mastery of new procedures and skills.

Yet, the actual learning can only take place in the mind of the individual pupil: Only the pupil can construct the concepts and make connections between them, forge new ideas, and articulate them in the solution of problems. This poses teachers with an apparent dilemma. When they talk to instruct and inform, they have little idea how individual pupils are interpreting what they say and no guarantee that their ideas are being appropriately reconstructed by those they are addressing. On the other hand, if left to work things out for themselves on the basis of structured materials, pupils may easily become confused and disheartened. Or, if their interests alone determine the selection of tasks they engage in, they may easily remain content with familiar activities or be side-tracked by the attraction of the moment. In either case they fail to make the long-term systematic progress that, as teachers, it is our responsibility to ensure.

The way out of this dilemma, we have argued, is to recognize that teaching and learning are *collaborative* enterprises in which the participants contribute, as far as possible, on an equal footing. Conversation provides the means in the pre-school years whereby children not only learn to talk but talk to learn. Through open-ended, exploratory conversation about the topics and issues that arise from shared activities and interests, parents provide information relevant to the children's active drive to make sense of their experience. Through the negotiation of meaning and intentions, they also guide their children toward more effective and socially adapted understanding and behavior.

When children come to school they have well developed strategies for learning through interaction with cooperative adults. These same strategies can continue to serve them well in school if only teachers believe in their value and organize the activities of the classroom to make such constructive collaboration possible. Some children will survive and make progress, even when such conditions do not obtain; but these are usually the children who have the greatest experience of collaborative interaction at home. Other children will have had less such experience at home and it is precisely these children who need it most at school, for neither teacher instruction nor graded papers and activities enable such children to take over the material presented in the curriculum and confidently make it their own.

All children, we would argue, will learn most effectively when there are frequent opportunities for collaborative talk with teachers and with fellow pupils. This does not mean there is no place for teacher instruction nor that all learning is best promoted through exploratory discussion. Clearly, there are times when new information is best imparted through the teacher's exposition, and there are certain, limited, areas of the curriculum where accuracy and speed are best acquired through practice which is monitored and corrected. But real understanding, which must be the basis of all true progress, requires opportunities for conversation in which there is an effort to achieve a meeting of minds through the shared construction and negotiation of meaning. To enable such opportunities to occur with sufficient frequency may well require a change in methods of organization and a greater willingness to let pupils share responsibility for the selection and management of the tasks in which they engage. In the short term this may be difficult, and even anxiety-provoking. But in the long term it will lead to a classroom environment in which children can actively and effectively learn from the teacher and the teacher can learn with the children.

Notes

1. A fuller account of the research program can be found in Wells (1981).
2. For further details of the results of the pre-school phase of the research, see Wells (1984).
3. The symbols are letters of the International Phonetic Alphabet; they represent the child's pronunciation of "look at that" as one single word.
4. The * indicates that a word is unintelligible.
5. A fuller account of this study can be found in Wells (in press-a).
6. This figure is reported for nursery classes and playgroups by Wood, McMahon, and Cranstoun (1980).

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Written Text as Social Interaction

The purpose of this article is to explore the nature of meaning as developed by human beings through interaction with each other. This interaction is obvious enough in the give and take of talk where conversants make themselves understood. But it is true of writing too. When readers understand a text, an exchange of meaning has taken place. Writers have succeeded in speaking to readers.

Because the concept of *text* is central to this interaction—it is the bridge between producer and receiver in both spoken and written communication—we have chosen to focus on elements of text functioning as they relate to this interaction. By "text" we mean any example of language in use no matter whether it is spoken or written, no matter whether it is long (like a book) or short (like an "EXIT" sign). Although our examples deal mainly with written language, our framework is equally useful for many aspects of spoken discourse.

We focus mainly on writing because the interactive character of writing is both less obvious and less studied than that of speech. Indeed, common wisdom has it that the major difference between them is that spoken discourse is interactive whereas written texts are non-interactive and autonomous. We believe these analyses are misconceived on this point, and that, as discourse, both writing and speaking are fundamentally interactive.

We begin by looking at fluent writers and some of the unique ways in which their texts accomplish this interaction. Then we consider one beginning writer to see how she gradually appropriates both the resources and options available in the written language.

How Language is Interactive

Interactive views of language and meaning are by no means universal and are indeed uncommon in writing research. The most important work has been done largely on the West Coast (e.g., Ochs & Schiefflin, 1979) and in England (e.g., Wells, 1981). Nonetheless, most research on the composing process depicts language production essentially as an affair between writer and text. It is not immediately clear in what sense the private activity of writing might be aptly termed interactive. Indeed, many educators and researchers believe the chief challenge of writing instruction is teaching students to compose "autonomous" texts, i.e., texts that stand on their own and succeed in their rhetorical function without the need for interaction between writers and their readers.

Writing is obviously not interactive in the behavioral sense that writers and readers take turns as do speakers and listeners. But then spoken language is not interactive simply because the participants take conspicuous turns. All language—whether written or spoken—is interactive in the abstract sense that its use involves an exchange of meaning, and the text is the means of exchange (Halliday, 1978). The fact that readers do not take turns with and rarely respond to writers does not mean that written language is a non-interactive

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medium. Written language bears the *potential for interaction*, and any given act of comprehension is just such an exchange between writers and their readers (Nystrand, 1982b, 1983).

Language generally is interactive in the sense that all discourse presumes a joint "contract" between producer and receiver, both of whom must abide by its terms if they are to understand one another. This contract has been discussed in a number of important papers representing a variety of theoretical orientations. This theme has been studied by psychologists and other scholars in the following ways:

1. Psycholinguists Clark and Haviland (1977) posit the following *given-new contract* as a fundamental governing principal in language production: "The speaker agrees (a) to use given information to refer to information she thinks the listener can uniquely identify from what he already knows and (b) to use new information to refer to information she believes to be true but is not already known to the listener."

   In more recent research on the role of mutual knowledge in communication, Clark and Carlson note, more simply, "For communication to be successful, speakers must share certain knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions with the people they are talking to" (1982, p. 2).
2. Philosopher Grice (1975) makes the *cooperative principle* the central tenet of his work on conversation: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." For the implications of Grice's work for writing, see Cooper (1982).
3. Psychologist Rommetveit outlines the basic psychological concept of *message structure* as the tacit agreement whereby we "writ[e] on the premises of the reader [and read] on the premises of the writer" (1974, p. 63).
4. Linguist Halliday defines both spoken and written texts as "a sociological event, a semiotic encounter through which the meanings that constitute the social system are *exchanged.* The individual member [both speaker and listener, writer and reader] is, by virtue of his membership, a 'meaner,' one who means. By his acts of meaning, and those of other individual members, the social reality is created, maintained in good order, and continuously shaped and modified" (1978, p. 139).
5. Social phenomenologist Schutz (1967) notes the central importance of the *reciprocity principle* in all social activity including discourse: Actors in any collaborative activity (e.g., writers and readers in text) orient their actions (e.g., writing and reading) on certain standards which are taken for granted as rules of conduct by the social group to which they belong (e.g., the community of writer-readers). At the level of text, both expression and comprehension require participation in a common textual space (cf. Nystrand, 1982c).
6. Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1962; 1978) views language as internalized dialogue and social, group behavior. For Vygotsky, the power of speaking and writing are in their capabilities to mediate and transform shared definitions of experience.

In order to understand the interactive character of writing, one must recognize that the criteria of language production are social. Writers, like speakers, do not just "produce language." To engage in discourse—that is, to produce language which is functional in some context of use—they must skillfully negotiate key text points with appropriate text options. They must recognize where to elaborate, where to abbreviate, where to paragraph, and so on (Nystrand, in press-a). As we shall shortly note, exactly what makes certain text points more key than others and some options more appropriate than others depends ultimately on who is telling whom about what, i.e., on the need to share knowledge and maintain a balance of discourse between writer and reader.

The Reciprocity Principle

Just how is the reciprocity principle important in speaking and writing? How does this expectation on the part of conversants that they should understand one another make a difference in what they say and write? Many times, of course, the terms of reciprocity are not honored—speakers talk at cross purposes and readers find texts turgid and unclear. But when writers are in tune with their readers, they succeed in all the ways noted above. They carefully balance given and new information, they say just enough and not too much, and they take for granted what is appropriate and elaborate clearly that which cannot be taken for granted. That is, they honor their commitment to the terms of their contract, the reciprocity principle.

The expectation of reciprocity in discourse is important because it means that the shape and conduct of discourse is determined not only by what the speaker or writer has to say (speaker/writer meaning) or accomplish (speaker/writer purpose) but also by the joint expectation of the conversants that they should understand one another (producer-receiver contract). Discourse may consequently be viewed as a social act based on the premise of common categorizations and mutual knowledge (Lewis, 1969; Clark & Marshall, 1981; Smith, 1982). Both speakers and writers must fashion texts that will establish and maintain this mutual knowledge and so effect an exchange of meaning. In talk this negotiation is comparatively conspicuous, manifesting itself in turn taking, querulous glances and rephrasings, etc. In writing, however, this process is more subtle. The writer must skillfully treat key text points such as the start of a text or the introduction of complicated ideas which could threaten reciprocity in a context of eventual use (cf. Nystrand, 1983), e.g., future reference, personal communication, etc. This is not to say, of course, that the aim of discourse is always substantive agreement, but only that the character and conduct of discourse are governed by the conversants' expectations for understanding one another. In making this point, we are making a distinction between the *practical purposes* of discourse and the *principles* which govern its functioning.

The criterion of shared knowledge as a condition for clear communication requires special tasks of skilled writers and speakers. Writing for experts is very different from writing for nonexperts for precisely this reason. The problem for the writer is not just that the expert knows more than the nonexpert; the expert's knowledge is also more highly integrated than the nonexpert's. Hence, the expert is more likely than is the nonexpert to approach the text with clearly defined expectations, particularly about the main idea, as well as a ready appreciation for fine points and relationships among concepts and details. While specialists appreciate details of elaboration, nonexperts who are confused by difficult texts may be overwhelmed by these details.[1] Rather than further *specification*, these low-knowledge readers need *category definition*. They need the main idea to cope with and organize all the details: titles, adequate paragraphing, advanced organizers, careful layout, and other forms of text segmentation will help.[2]

To more fully understand how texts function in interactions such as these, we must view language production as more than an encoding and transmission of writer purpose or meaning. The view of language production as the transmission of thought will not explain why texts take the form they do. To understand the shape of discourse and the principles which govern its conduct, we must focus instead on the joint expectations of the conversants for reciprocity and shared knowledge.

What Writers Do

To create texts that work (function to maintain a balance of discourse), writers must successfully negotiate key text points. Reciprocity is potentially threatened at each of the following points:

Key Text Points:

1. Start of communication. Before doing anything else in a text, the writer must "initialize" the discourse by identifying common ground with the reader. That is, writer and readers must begin on the same communicative footing, which the writer, of course, must initiate. This may be as simple as a title or as complicated as an introduction which provides essential background information.
2. New (i.e., unshared) information. Every mention of unshared information (i.e., unshared with the reader) defines a key text point for the writer. Normally, new information is adequately contextualized by English word order: old (known) information typically comes before new.

Writer Options:

If the information is "highly new" (e.g., technical), then the writer has the following options, which differ in appropriateness according to the extent of reader knowledge:

1. Elaboration (use of co-text which provides further specification, e.g., definitions of technical terms, glosses on obscure expressions, and graphic illustrations of potentially ambiguous concepts)
2. Segmentation (methods of contrast which provide category definition, e.g., titles, paragraphing and indentation, advanced organizers, and many forms of punctuation.)

Written Language Resources:

To accomplish the options, writers have available to them the following written language resources:

1. For footing: such genre conventions as "Once upon a time," "Dear Xxxx," "Re:," etc. (For

further discussion, see Steinmann's, 1981, treatment of superordinate genre conventions and Halliday & Hasan's, 1976, structure of discourse textual component).

2. For elaboration: explanations, examples, definitions, glosses, graphic illustrations accompanying text, and other sorts of co-text (For further discussion see Kintsch's, 1974, treatment of argument repetition and Halliday & Hasan's, 1976, treatment of theme systems).
3. For segmentation: paragraphing, indenting, advanced organizers, titles, quotation marks, etc. (For further discussion see Halliday & Hasan's, 1976, *transition*, p. 295).

These written language resources are the possibilities for text available to writers—the palate of text structures from which writers work—and the criteria that ultimately distinguish written texts from non-texts.[3] These criteria also distinguish, we shall see, the texts of fluent writers from those of beginners.

Of course, a writer's resources and options are two different kinds of things. Resources are those language and text structures available for written expression. By contrast, text options define what skilled writers actually do with these resources when they compose texts that clearly speak to their readers. Halliday and Hasan (1976) provide an inventory of many of these resources in their study of *Cohesion in English*. They define cohesion as "a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it" (p. 8). It is achieved mainly through reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and various lexical devices such as collocation. We must note, however, that this inventory of the resources and analysis of text cohesion will not describe or explain how writers use these resources. It will no more do this than an inventory of the painter's palate and analysis of the completed canvas will reveal how painters go from palate to painting. Nor is there any reason why it should. After all, Halliday and Hasan's analysis of how texts hang together concerns text resources and texts, not writers writing.

A brief look at paragraphing will clarify this distinction. Halliday and Hasan show that paragraphs are effectively defined in terms of cohesive density (1976, pp. 296-297). That is, most English prose is characterized by a substantially higher degree of cohesion within paragraphs than between them. This apparent discontinuity of text is no failure; it is the natural result of writers carefully elaborating essential themes within paragraphs at the same time that they indicate appropriate shifts in the discourse by indenting for both semantic and rhetorical effect. Hence, paragraphing typically involves a weakening of cohesion because the writer opts to indent and by so doing indicates a shift in the flow of discourse.

We will consider some examples of text options below. At this point, we wish only to note that the options which writers elect at key text points are critical to how writers construct intelligible texts and successfully negotiate meaning in written language. As noted above, a writer's first major text option is text elaboration. Text elaborations work to develop a text by putting new information in perspective or context for readers. Because new information is by definition *unshared* information (i.e., unshared by writer and reader), its introduction may well threaten reciprocity—especially if the reader is not knowledgeable enough to make the necessary "bridging" inferences. To maintain reciprocity and hence assure communication, the effective writer elaborates new information with given information, i.e., with information that is shared. Good examples of such elaborations include definitions, explanations, examples, and graphic illustrations of technical terms in well-written technical manuals.

The other major text option is text segmentation. Text segmentations help clarify the organization of a text by sharpening contrasts and relationships for readers. Only so much new information may be effectively elaborated before the topic becomes indistinct. For example, if I know little about computers, I will be helped by a technical manual that carefully defines each new term. But if the manual defines each term without adequately contrasting them, it may only serve to further confuse me. Hence, in addition to elaborating and contextualizing new information, writers must divide their texts into manageable units. And "manageable," of course, depends in large measure on how much the reader already knows (cf. Miller's, 1956, classic "The magic number 7 plus or minus 2"). Hence, technical writers must organize texts differently for novices than for advanced users.

Becoming a Writer: One Case Study[4]

In this section we examine the principle of reciprocity from another point of view, that of the learner. Our analysis is based on weekly observations of one student spanning one year from mid-kindergarten to mid-first grade. During the course of our research, we have been impressed with how individually charted each child's point of entry and path of development is, as he or she becomes initiated into the written language community.

Consider Samantha, a six-year-old who has been writing since kindergarten. In spite of the school's strong curricular emphasis on phonics in its reading instruction (and thus implicitly on the strong connection between spoken and written language), it is clear that Samantha has *not* defined writing as the mere transcription of spoken language, as "talk written down." Rather she has treated written language as a new meaning-making medium. In her early experiments with writing, Samantha conflates the resources of written language with other, better established symbolic modes. For example, her "writing" resembles her drawing, as well as her talk in certain public discourse situations, such as show-and-tell.

She also conflates text with task. That is to say, the act of writing is coherent more at the level of social action (e.g., fulfilling an assignment) than at the semiotic level of text (e.g., narrating a story or writing someone a message). Her development has occurred primarily along two lines of differentiation:

1. *Semiotic differentiation.* The forms, functions, and conditions of production—the ways of making meaning with written language—are gradually differentiated from other semiotic resources. Samantha has come to differentiate and recognize key text points and treat them with appropriate text options.
2. *Text-context differentiation.* The coherence or meaning of the text itself is gradually differentiated from the coherence or meaning of the task and the context in which the writing occurs. Samantha's texts, which were initially label-like and citational, become operational in terms of some context of use.

Though her early texts are coherent and meaningful in limited ways that seem "odd" to full-fledged members of the written language community (i.e., fluent readers), Samantha has come over the year to differentiate and mobilize the resources specific to written language in order to produce written language texts that "take over," to use Britton's (1978) apt term.

Early Texts

In her early texts Samantha extends the forms, functions, and composing strategies in her drawing to include "writing" (cf. Gundlach's, 1982, concept of early writing as "a mixed medium"). In drawing, Samantha has built up a graphic repertoire—a kind of graphic lexicon—that consists of rather schematized, stylized, and conventional figures used to indicate persons and objects. Neither too abstract nor too detailed, the figures strike a functional balance between Samantha's own expressive needs and the viewer's perceptual needs, and hence show a working knowledge of the reciprocity principle. Learned primarily from mentors, these figures may be considered part of her cultural heritage, as are the written words learned later.

In drawing, Samantha typically divides the paper into smaller chunks (often vertical and/or horizontal thirds) and then proceeds to fill each one up with items from her repertoire (see Figure 1).[5] These figures rarely overlap, interact, or create narrative scenes; rather it is the overall space—the boundaries of the paper—that constitutes the primary reference point. The graphic figures function more lexically than syntactically, with each figure generating a kind of semantic field. Meaning is conveyed presentationally rather than discursively (Langer, 1942).

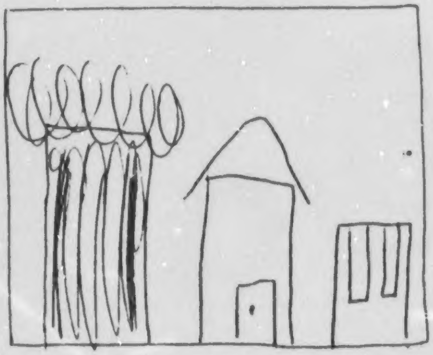

Figure 1. An early drawing.

By learning to write important words and phrases (e.g., names of family members, "LOVE," "I love you," etc.), Samantha expands and enhances her graphic repertoire. Indeed one of her preferred uses of written language throughout the year has been to create "books" by drawing one figure and one label per page (Figure 2).

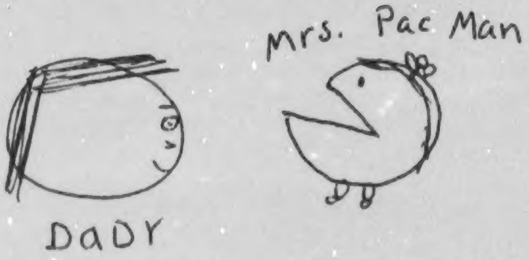

Figure 2. Drawings for Samantha's "book."

It is revealing that both the drawing schemata and the written labels exhibit an essential balance between Samantha's needs for expression and our own for comprehension and perception: we clearly understand what she is saying. Reciprocity is fulfilled, the balance of discourse maintained. Nonetheless, each representation is more label-like or citational than it is textual, i.e., operational in some context of use (cf. Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 299).

As Samantha begins to write more, the parallels with her drawing are striking. In both drawing and writing, Samantha proceeds by thirds. In Figure 3 (an example of an early illustrated text), she divides the upper portion into vertical thirds, creating a kitchen by drawing three solid columns that frame a stick figure and a tray of cookies baking in the oven.

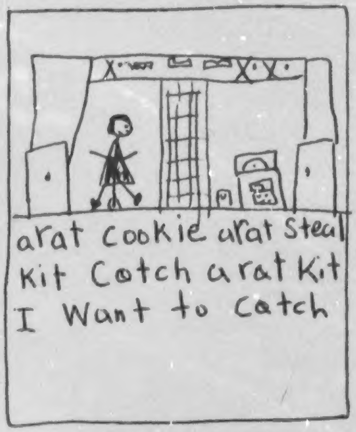
arat cookie arat Steal
Kit Catch arat Kit
I Want to Catch

Figure 3. An early illustrated text.

The columns create "chunks" in which she locates centrally key figures. Similarly, she divides the lower written portion into horizontal thirds. She pulls items from her written language repertoire and places them lexically, not syntactically (i.e., without regard for word arrangement), across the top two lines, thereby producing more of an image than a message. In the third line Samantha stretches a bit and begins a sentence; perhaps writing the words or drawing the picture generated an idea or image. But this idea or image was apparently not so compelling as to motivate her to complete the sentence, to go beyond her apparent criterion length: after all, she reasons, three lines make a text.

In short, these text parts are entirely unrelated to the requirements of any communicative situation. They are not true functional text points. Rather they are canonical text parts, invoked regardless of purpose, context, and circumstance. For some reason—perhaps the teacher's well-intentioned prelude to five-paragraph themes? perhaps Samantha's way of simplifying the task?—a text is a text for Samantha only if it has three parts. In this respect, Samantha's texts are like children's symbolic representations generally, e.g., putting two eyes in early profile drawing because the creatures do after all have two eyes and only one eye would be wrong.

We may summarize this period of Samantha's early text development as follows:

1. There is evidence that the writer knows the general terms of the reciprocity principle and the process whereby individuals participate in the negotiation of meaning.
2. The level of coherence is overwhelmingly at the level of task, not text.
3. Texts are more citational than operational in some context of use.
4. Texts are divided into canonical text parts, not functional text points.
5. Texts work more graphically than symbolically.

Transitional Texts

In Samantha's school, like most, literacy is a valued cultural and cognitive acquisition; we may properly view her early development as a (w)rite of passage. Surrounded by a rich environment of print—books, games, signs, posters, letters, directories, etc.—Samantha has throughout the year appropriated those written forms that are salient to her. She copies books, she writes greeting cards, letters, and messages, she invents games, she creates lists, and she "makes books"—all as part of growing up for her.

In these early appropriations of cultural genres, however, Samantha adopts and utilizes mainly the global features or forms of the genres, not the content. When Samantha makes her books, for example, she designs a cover with an appropriately spaced and capitalized title ("THE PITCHER BOOK"), paginates the sheets of paper, fills each page with items from her graphic repertoire (e.g., smiling faces), and finally staples several sheets of paper together along the left edge. Alternatively, she may take the title and main idea of an already existent book and invent a new opening line. Anyone who might try to read the pages of these books will find them sketchy and incomplete. Some of these "books" have no written content at all.

Nonetheless, as far as Samantha is concerned, she has made a book; and the coherence or meaning of these writings lies more at the level of task than in the text. These transitional texts serve many purposes: they fulfill a school assignment; they allow this beginning writer to role-play a significant adult role—writer; they allow Samantha to assimilate and stabilize salient written language resources; and they give her the opportunity to create a cultural artifact as a gift. In Halliday's (1978) terms, such writing represents a "behavior potential" ("I can" or "This is how you write") rather than just a "meaning potential" ("I say" or "I mean").

Many of Samantha's written texts at this stage parallel her spoken discourse, especially her public-performance, show-and-tell style in which first she presents something visually, and then comments on it. Hence, in her illustrated texts, it is the drawing which establishes communicative footing and presents known information whereas the written text pushes the communication forward by marking and highlighting new information.

In Figure 4, the first sentence specifies actor and action and serves as footing for the communication. The second sentence assumes *the building* as given information and pushes the communication forward with *is shaking*. Hence, the written text marks the given provided by the drawing. Samantha has learned something about producing functioning, communicative texts. But not everything: When she completed this text, she re-read it aloud. Eileen, sitting next to her, commented, "That doesn't make sense"—a critique Samantha ignored. The text does, of course, "make sense" in relation to the drawing, but not in the ways readers expect. Reciprocity is fulfilled in terms of "the mixed medium" of drawing and writing.

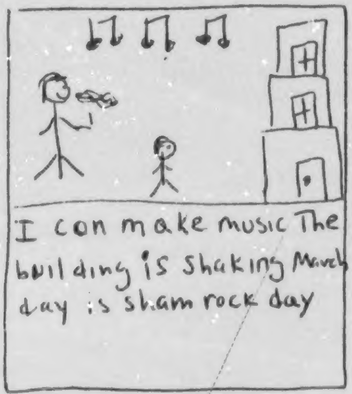
I con make music The
building is shaking March
day is sham rock day

Figure 4. A transitional text.

Figure 5 provides an example of Samantha's appropriation of given and new information in both text and illustration. As noted above, Samantha generally understands the importance of contextualizing new information. That is, she strikes a balance between her own expressive needs and the needs of her readers. But her early texts, as we have noted, are more citational and canonical than functional—they work independently of some context of use. Her understanding of how to proceed in terms of available text options and resources of the written language is still immature and inconsistent. Nonetheless, her attempt to balance given and new information—mixed as they are in drawing and writing—indicates she is no longer operating solely at the level of task; she recognizes that key text points are determined by the requirement to share and negotiate meanings. Moreover, the text elaborates the drawing in detail, and the pattern of segmentation is constrained and determined by a left-to-right rendering of the items in the drawing. Clearly, this is a new, transitional stage in Samantha's development. The text is more sophisticated and more ambitious: She is trying to say something to someone about something with the resources of written language.

The Russian psychologist A. Luria (1929/1977-1978) noted this very distinction when he asked 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children who could not yet write to "jot down" sentences which he dictated to them. He then gave them quizzes about their "notes." When asked about a particular squiggle ("What's that?"), many children exclaimed, "That's how you write!" A few children, however, actually caught on to the idea that their texts said something and referred to their scribbles in answering Luria's questions. For the one group, writing was an act of play, a way of "writing like grownups." For the other group, writing was a means to communicative ends.

Samantha's early and transitional texts differ in just this way. She has moved on to a new and higher level of development. We may summarize this period of Samantha's transitional text development as follows:

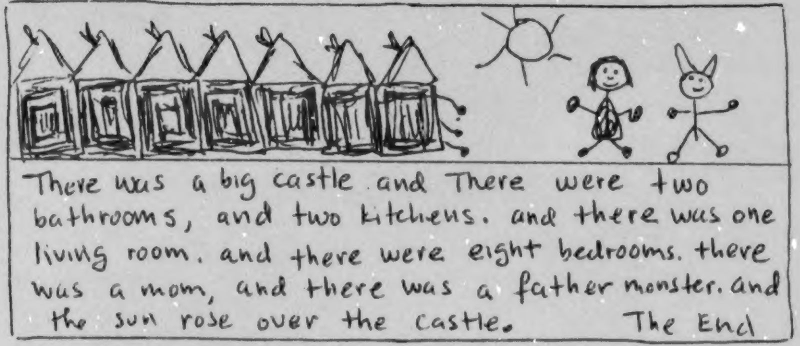
There was a big castle and There were two
bathrooms, and two kitchens. and there was one
living room. and there were eight bedrooms. there
was a mom, and there was a father monster. and
the sun rose over the castle. The End

Figure 5. A more sophisticated, transitional text.

1. Global task features are still undifferentiated, though the presence of given and new information indicates a budding awareness of functional text points to replace canonical text parts.
2. A growing sense of appropriate text options is exhibited, although their distribution in writing and drawing is idiosyncratic and inconsistent.
3. During this period, Samantha's written texts have grown in length from labels to full assertions; the author is better able to articulate and elaborate her intentions with the resources of written text.

Functional Texts

Throughout the year, in particular situations, Samantha produced a number of fully functioning texts. In our terms, she successfully identifies and negotiates appropriate text points with appropriate text options—she manages meaningful interaction and communication with her readers, as in the following example:

> The Stroy is aboat human beans gos to School.
>
> One day They went to school and They learn a new game in gmy Theyall like The game The game is called Freestag They play it Then it was time to go bake to the room and they did workseets and work book and Then The teacher called som people to Read in The Book The Book is called boats and The had one chapt to finsh
>
> The Eed

Samantha wrote this text near the end of the observational period (mid-first grade). The observer gave her a self-addressed stamped envelope one day at school and asked Samantha to write her a letter about her human bean (one of Samantha's favorite stuffed animals).

The results are impressive. Coherence or meaning lies at the level of text as well as task: text-context differentiation has clearly occurred. This coherence of text is evident when we examine theme/rheme patterns in the text. (*Theme* identifies the topic of expression whereas *rheme* extends this topic by introducing new information. Theme is what the speaker wants to discuss; rheme is what the speaker says about it [Halliday, 1967].) Analysis of Samantha's text into theme/rheme shows discrete and appropriate text points as well as effective, consistent use of text options. Coherence is achieved largely by *run-through thematic progressions,* where the author repeats the theme and adds new information in the rheme:

One day *they*/went to school	T_1---R_1
They/learn a new game in gym	R_1---R_2
They all/like the game	T_1---$R_3(R_2)$
The game/is called Freeze tag	$T_2(R_3)$---$R_4(R_2)$
They/play it	T_1---$R_5(R_2)$

Once in this small section, Samantha uses a *linear progression*—that is, the rheme becomes the theme in the succeeding sentence. This text elaboration effectively defines the name of "a game." Recognizing the key text point occasioned by this introduction of new information (i.e., *a new game*), she elects to elaborate and so maintains coherence. In this text, Samantha has come a long way from her earlier spatial and canonical three-part texts.

Cohesion is also achieved through reference—"they" and "it"—which is not surprising considering that the text is elaborated via a centering pattern. A few words repeat, and there are eight instances of lexical collocation, i.e., words that relate and thus form a semantic network that holds the text together. In this case, these words all center on school and related activities.

The coherence of this text is also due to the fact that it is a clear, albeit primitive narrative, and works consistently in terms of our expectations for this genre of discourse. The text may be divided into three main events: gym, worksheets, and reading time. In each case, Samantha chooses to elaborate "they" in the sort of text structure Applebee (1978) terms "primitive narrative." For example, the first event in the story centers around the actions "they" do. The second event shifts the focus to "It was time"—that is, to the authority of the school schedule, and in the third event to "the teacher."

We are impressed with the textual sophistication of this example, which is probably intelligible to most adult readers—quite an accomplishment for a first grader. The text coheres in all the ways that Halliday and Hasan note: (a) *cohesion* through reference and lexical collocation; (b) *theme systems* (in this case patterns that center on "they"); and (c) *discourse structure* (in this case narrative structure). The text exhibits none of the early conflation of writing and drawing, and it is far more sophisticated than her early label-like representations. It is clearly operational in a context of use. And the author accomplishes this communication exclusively and consistently in terms of the resources of the written language. She is clearly working from an enlarged palate of language resources.

This stage of functional text development may be summarized as follows:

1. The writer effectively initiates the communication by providing a communicative footing, i.e., by identifying common ground with the reader. The elements of this footing are title, narrative structure, and shared knowledge of school life.
2. The writer recognizes the introduction of new information as an essential text point, potentially threatening to the reciprocity of the discourse if left untreated.
3. The writer effectively negotiates these text points with appropriate and consistent options.

In short, the author achieves a functional balance between her own expressive needs and the requirements of her readers by successfully negotiating key text points with options available to her.

Conclusion

In one respect, beginning writers are "linguists" of sorts—written-text experimenters whose tasks are to discover the significant differences and regularities of written text and systematize them for use. In another respect, beginning writers are like beginning painters—they must learn how something can be said with pen and paper despite the fact that not one single stroke, word, or sentence corresponds naturally to what we call thought. While beginners have a general sense of reciprocity in discourse, they have little if any awareness of the idiosyncratic resources of written language for discourse. Nor is it clear to them which text parts count as significant text points and what options are available at each point. The beginner must experiment with the palate of written language before the canvas of text is possible. We note important similarities between the problem of the beginner learning to make texts function and the problem of the fluent writer—namely managing the resources of the written language, not to transmit but to make meaning.

Notes

The authors thank Marcia Farr for her comments regarding many points in this paper.

1. In the case of the ambiguous text, either the writer needs to elaborate unclear points or the reader needs to acquire some knowledge of the topic. The reader finds the text inadequately developed and terms inadequately defined ("Tell me more"); and requires further specification. In the case of the abstruse text, either the writer needs to clarify the topic or the reader needs to acquire substantial knowledge of the topic. The reader finds the text confusing ("What is this about anyway?") and requires category definition. The failure of the ambiguous text to facilitate exchange of meaning is *rarefaction;* the failure of the abstruse text is *impaction*. For further discussion of these concepts, see Nystrand (1979, 1982a).
2. An extended discussion of these distinctions will be found in Nystrand (in press-b).
3. These written language resources are the writer's subset of Halliday's textual, or text-forming, component of language.
4. The case study material in this section is drawn from Himley (1983).
5. The figures in this article are the co-author's renderings of the originals.

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Hilary Hester

Peer Interaction in Learning English as a Second Language

- "In a school in [an industrial section of London], a young teacher takes lunchtime lessons from a group of his pupils. They are children whose families came originally from the Caribbean and they are teaching him their particular West Indian dialect."[1]
- In another area of London a school class contains speakers of Spanish, Greek, Cantonese, Japanese, Gujarati, and Urdu. Within walking distance are schools whose pupils are virtually monolingual.
- "A boy from the local comprehensive school helps his father in the evenings by serving in the family fish and chip shop. The family came originally from Cyprus. If you wait. . .long enough, you are likely to hear him speaking Greek to his father, a London form of standard English to his customers and a broader Cockney to any of his schoolfellows who might come in for chips, a chat or both."

The above anecdotes illustrate the linguistic diversity found in London today and in other urban centers throughout Britain. They represent the variety which exists in a society where many children speak a language or languages other than English at home, or dialects of English not traditionally common in our classrooms. Britain's multicultural society, like many other societies, is also multilingual. Approaches to language development, however, are often based on the assumption of a monolingual population.

Until recently, the most common approach to language teaching for children whose mother tongue was not English was to insist that they be taught English as swiftly as possible. While learning English remains a necessity for children living in Britain, in a pluristic society it is not the only priority. We must remember that children who are learning English as a second language have a first language which is very much a part of their system of meanings and ways of learning. The goal in teaching English as a second language is to help children "adopt a positive attitude to their bilingualism and wherever possible help them maintain and deepen their knowledge of their mother tongue" (Bullock, 1975).

To this end, the SLIPP (Second Language Learning in the Primary School) Project was set up at the Inner London Education Authority's Centre for Urban Educational Studies in 1975 to explore ways of using ongoing programs and working procedures in primary schools to provide for the special language needs of children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Special attention was given to language skills and methods of work which focused on first hand experiences, extensive use of spoken language, and children working collaboratively. The examples of work and approaches to second language teaching described in this article have been drawn from the work of this project.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative talk, an intrinsic part of curriculum activities, is important for *all* children. Opportunities

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for engaging in peer interaction are particularly crucial for children learning English as a second language. Up to now, most programs developed for them have been based on models of foreign language teaching. But children learning English in an English-speaking country have access to the language from many sources: other children, the community, the radio and TV, as well as their teachers and other adults in the school. Exposure to a diversity and range of English gives them important advantages.

In Example 1 Marvan and Rowia, both five years old, are talking together while they play with the sand tray. Marvan, whose family came from

Example 1*

Rowia:	The small one is for the small bucket. . .and the big one. .is for the big bucket. The small one will take lotser than you.	*There are different size buckets and different size spades in the sand tray.*
Marvan:	No, it doesn't.	
Rowia:	Yes, it does, look. .look. .here is. . Yes, it does (softly). Yes, it does.	
Marvan:	*It* doesn't (challengingly). Mrs. Wake. .er. .the little bucket takes a lot. .of sand.	*Appealing for confirmation to his teacher.*
Rowia:	What takes a lots of sand?	
Marvan:	Mine takes a lots sand than yours.	
Rowia:	Look. Look. Look. Mine have do take lots of sand.	
Marvan:	Mine takes lots of sand than you. Goodie, goodie, goodie, goodie.	*Hitting the sand to flatten it.*
Rowia:	Goodie, goodie. I have lots of you. Goodie, goodie. Can you do that?	*Inverting her bucket.*
Marvan:	Goodie, goodie, goodie.	*Engrossed with preparing his sand pie.*
Rowia:	There see. . .upside down. (pause) You always do that. Look at my place. It's clean.	*Meaning possibly "This is how to do it."*
	Hurray. (removing the bucket)	*Glee at a successful sand pie.*
Marvan:	Look at mine. It's big. I have a lot of sand of. .than you. (Sounds of interference from other children) Aah. .no, that's mine.	
Rowia:	Yours is the biggest.	*A friendly gesture?*
Marvan:	Oh. .lots of sand (hums to himself)	
Rowia:	Mine's got lot of sand. Look at. .look at what I done. . (sings to herself). Look at. .(tuts). . *oh. .it's a* messy *castle. .look what I done.*	*Noise of sand being flattened.* *With great disappointment.*
Marvan:	Aha. Small one (mockingly)	
Rowia:	I'll show you how to do the castle. I'm going to take one of them. (long pause)	*She seems to have run out of sand.*
Marvan:	No sand. Aha.	
Rowia:	Yes sand.	*Taking from Marvan's pile. Echoing the form of Marvan's observation.*
Marvan:	No. Mine. Don't take mine.	
Rowia:	I will.	
Marvan:	No. No. (long pause). You couldn't do this kind of thing (singing).	*Reproving Rowia.*
Rowia:	I can. . look at mine house.	
Marvan:	Er. .(sings) da, da, da, dee, dee, dee.	*A wordless song.*

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Marvan:	I'm taking all the sand.	*Retaliating now.*
Rowia:	You're no. You're not.	
Marvan:	Look. .look. .hey, you're taking my sand.	
Rowia:	There is many. . .you have to share them.	
Marvan:	But you have a lot of sand.	*Reproachfully.*
Rowia:	There is many. .you have to share with me.	
Marvan:	I have seven. . .yeah.	*Although he has only a little, agrees to share.*
Rowia:	I have thousand.	
Marvan:	Yeah. . .yeah.	
Rowia:	You haven't got seven. .you have thousand as well.	*The amounts are equal.*
Marvan:	Take my sand and I'll take some of your sand.	*Dares her to poach!*

*Collected by Rhona Lake, St. Cuthbert with St. Matthias Primary School, London, 1977.

Kuwait two years ago, speaks Arabic, Farsee, and English at home; Rowia's family came to England from the Sudan one year ago, and they speak Arabic at home. Both children started school in May and are now two weeks into the autumn term. Their class is large and very few children are native speakers of English. They have not had access to specialist language teaching.

There can be different ways of analyzing this transcription. Perhaps the most obvious is to examine the "grammatical errors" the children are making. But to do this only would be to ignore important aspects of this dialogue. *That there is talking at all is significant.* Sand pies could have been made by each of them in silence. Instead, they use the activity to engage each other in conversation. In spite of their obvious competitiveness for making the best sand pie, and gathering the most sand, they persist in the activity together, sometimes challenging each other, sometimes supporting each other, and show sophisticated social skills in sharing the resources and in maintaining the interaction. They both *need* to talk and the audience they provide for each other adds to their enjoyment in playing with the sand. Moreover, they are using and developing their social skills through a new language.

What cannot be shown here is the range and appropriateness of their intonation as they challenge, cajole, and sympathize with each other. It is also significant that the children have had no access to specialist language teaching, and that in a very short time, with a summer holiday between their first and second terms at school, they have both learned to use a range of the grammatical features of English. Marvan, for example, demonstrates he has sorted out for himself some of the ways of expressing quantity with a mass noun. He is confident with the alternatives *lots of sand/a lot of sand*, and makes a distinction between *all the sand/some of your sand/no sand*. What is important here is that he has made these connections for himself. What he is experimenting with is the means for comparing the amount of sand he has with the amount Rowia has. In building on what he knows, he temporarily loses his command of these forms, and tries out possible combinations:

a lots sand — than yours	Line 10
lots of sand — than you	Line 13
a lot of sand of — than you	Line 21-22

Both the children have already learned to use other complex forms of the language in advance of the usual kind of grading in a language course intended for this stage of learning.

e.g.,

Rowia:	I'll show you how to do the castle	Line 30
	I'm going to take one of them	Line 31
Marvan:	You couldn't do this kind of thing	Line 36-37

They are also encoding complex meanings in structurally simple forms:

Rowia:	There is many	Line 45
Marvan:	I have seven	Line 46

But each understands the layers of meaning the other is trying to convey. Finally, some of the vocabulary can only have been learned through playing in the sand tray—"bucket/castle/sand"—and through being involved in the activity.

This eavesdropping on the sand tray reveals some of the difficulties of following a graded teaching program for children learning English as a second language. The children are not learning the language in a simple linear progression, but are weaving together and learning to use the language they hear around them. This points to a need for an approach to language teaching that meshes with the language program children are developing for themselves. For this, we need to be skilled at analyzing what children are doing, at knowing *how* and *when* to intervene appropriately to help them with the areas they find difficult, and at leading them into areas of language use they seem not to have encountered.

Using Children's Natural Language Learning Power

In the term they have been enrolled in school Rowia and Marvan have learned a lot of English which has not been taught. For many years we have argued strongly against the notion that children "pick up" English. It was right to do so. In the early '60s there was a widespread feeling that children would learn English by playing and working in classrooms with their English-speaking peers. Some children did, some did not, or not well enough.

At that time an increasing number of teachers concerned about the failure of their children urged that children's needs were not being met, and that different approaches were needed. Many had worked overseas teaching English as a foreign language and that experience affected critically the teaching of English to our migrant child population. Although it was conceded that children did learn English from other children on the playground, this observation of the power of informal interaction and communication was not pursued. Instead, the overseas experience of teachers and the tried and tested methodology of published foreign language teaching materials formed the bedrock of approaches which were developed.

Those glimpses of children learning from each other which were discounted 15 years ago have now become an important focus. The mid-'60s also saw the beginnings of investigations into English mother-tongue speakers' acquisition and use of language. Through the major contributions of people such as Douglas Barnes (Barnes, Britton, Rosen, et al., 1969), William Labov (1977), Maureen Shields (1972), and Gordon Wells (1981), our understanding of a child's use of English, both with adults and other children, has grown. We are much more aware of the effects of the social context on a child's use of language; in particular the inhibiting pressure an adult can exert and the versatility children can display when talking to each other.

Drawing from the research and from observations of children and their language, the SLIPP Project was set up to investigate how children might be supported in their learning of English within the primary classroom. The project began at a time when thinking about second language learning and teaching was changing. At the Centre for Urban Educational Studies as in other areas of the country, we were looking more closely at the purposes for which children are learning English in the social context. Paramount here was the focus on the child as a thinker and learner. Contexts set up to make clear the meanings of newly introduced grammatical items had to be consistent with this view of the learner.

Increasingly, the work of specialist teachers began to resemble normal classroom work: language was taught through themes, through math and science investigations, etc. As this happened, the following question emerged: Could not the focus of specialist teaching be integrated into mainstream primary classrooms? In spite of the competent work undertaken by specialist teachers, some children were still failing. Doubts about the withdrawal group system as the only means of providing language support began to be expressed, not least by specialist teachers operating such systems in schools.

What the project has sought to do is find ways of moving the interaction from the playground into the classroom and to focus more on supporting children in their drive to learn English and less on teaching the prescribed items of a language course. The language syllabus then takes on the role of providing a framework for teachers. It helps one to think about the range of language a child needs to learn and provides labels for organizing it. For teachers who have had little or no experience of reflecting on the system of the language they speak, it can also provide an introduction to ways of analyzing the systems of English. It becomes a tool to use flexibly.

Normal curriculum activities provide starting points for supporting children in their learning of English, but what provides underpinning for the work is the teachers' understanding of the way English is organized as a system for communicating meanings. With that understanding, teachers are able to: (a) build on the children's willingness and ability to draw meaning from the context they are working in; (b) anticipate and expand the language-using potential of activities; (c) identify particular difficulties children are having with aspects of the language, and intervene to help; (d) monitor children's progress with English, giving access to new areas of usage through involvement in learning activities; and (e) set up activities so that talking is needed and purposeful.

Opportunities for collaborative learning offer support to children who are learning English. First, they are placed in contexts for which the use of English is necessary; if we want them to learn to speak English, then they need opportunities for talking. Second, they are given access to their new language through talking with their English-speaking peers. It is clear that some children have always taught themselves English through informal talking with their friends. Many learn only enough to "get by" in the classroom, but not enough to meet successfully the demands of many tasks.

What we need to do is strengthen the links between children through the consciously structured activities of the classroom, so they have access to language needed in learning as well as in interpersonal relationships. But perhaps the most significant gain for children in small group activities is that in collaborating—through talking and working together—they are able to share experiences as well as language. They build a common understanding of the world that is the classroom and learn to appreciate the contribution that each of them brings to it.

An important facet of conversation is that ideas are responded to and pursued by the participants until one of them changes the topic. Then the group pursues a new idea. With children, often it is not only the topic that is pursued, but in some contexts the same range of language is echoed by each in turn—because they are competing for control of the situation, or because they are enthusiastic about the topic. Example 2 shows Rosemarie, Carol, Ivanna, and Stayce pursuing a topic suggested when one of the group started talking about her family.

That a topic is often developed in this way, and that the same range of language is called into use, must give support to children learning English, so that they will, of course, feel more confident.

Repetition and Focus on Patterns

What has always been considered important in teaching English as a second language is the need to focus on the patterns of the language, not just words in isolation, and to give opportunities to learners for tuning into and rehearsing those patterns. The strength of these informal settings is that language gets repeated naturally because of the topic being discussed, and that children are using English in meaningful situations to fulfill their own intentions. Not only are they rehearsing language patterns, they are also learning from and talking to each other. It is not by chance that the topic, "Come to my house and visit my family," developed as it did (in Example 2); the sociolinguistic rules we follow in talk make it likely to happen. But the initial topic was a matter of chance. For example, Ivanna might have drawn attention to the beads in her hair or have asked the teacher where she lived, and those ideas would have been pursued instead.

If this topic development *is* a source of strength to children learning English, then we need to be able to predict where it will arise and influence the subject matter of discussion. Ultimately, our aim must be to draw this informal classroom interaction, which mirrors playground interaction, into mainstream curriculum areas, so that we give children power to use language to develop their learning and thinking.

Teachers have become increasingly aware of the importance of making opportunities in the classroom for children to share in their ideas through talking—not only in "free choice" activities, such as playing with the sand tray, but also through mainstream curriculum areas such as math and science. If we want children to become proficient at using language, space must be made for children to "practice" talking; to do it. This is as true for native speakers of the language as it is for those learning the language.

In Example 3, two girls, Enas and Istra, are investigating the properties of solid shapes. The girls are placing each shape in turn at the upper edge of an inclined plane and observing whether they roll or slide, move on all their faces, and along a line. They are nearly seven years old. Istra is English and Enas came to England from Saudi Arabia six months ago. They record the behavior of each shape on a chart.

If we can reasonably predict that language will be used in similar ways in similar contexts, then we can assume that a child learning English, working in a group with competent users of the language, will have access to appropriate ways of using language for an activity with the group. At the very least he or she will be introduced to the meanings expressed by the group through the involvement in the activity. Some children will learn through the activity the ways of expressing those meanings; others will need more experience of listening to and using the language; but the activity will be the starting point, and will sow the seeds for future development.

Often the focus for children's talking is the materials they are working with and using. The importance of visual support to convey meaning

Example 2*

Rosemarie:	You can come to my house. .and see my sister	*(to the teacher)*
Teacher:	And would I. . .	
Carol:	And see my little sister.	*Taking Rosemarie's idea*
Teacher:	That would be nice. I'd see. .	
Ivanna:	And see my little brother.	*Following Rosemarie & Carol*
Teacher:	Ah, now. Who would I see?	
Stayce:	I've got a little brother.	*Stayce has been in school a term and is learning English. Her home language is Punjabi.*
Ivanna:	I've got two sisters and one. .two brothers.	*Picking up Stayce's idea.*
Teacher:	Yes.	*(encouragingly).*
Stayce:	I've two brothers. I've got one sister. I got two aunties.	*Either she made a mistake earlier, or she is not to be outdone by Ivanna.*

* Collected by Maura Docherty at Heber Primary School, London, 1978.

Example 3*

Teacher: Now, I'm going to leave you for a minute. See if you can carry on on your own. All right? (She has worked with them briefly to give them a model for a way of working.)
Istra: Yes. That's slide.
Enas: Slides.
Istra: No, Look. Which one. . .it tip over.
Enas: Yeah. No, it can't slide. Let's see. Look.
Istra: Um. No. You try that.
Enas: It can't slide. . .in the line.
Istra: Can't it slide any way?
Enas: It can slide. .on all of the faces.
Istra: Yeah. I haven't tried this like that, have you?
Enas: Push it. No.
Istra: Yes, so we'll put it all back.
Enas: Now. .um. .the second one.
Istra: Now.
Enas: The second.
Istra: Now, does it roll?
Enas: What? That one?
Istra: No, no. The same one. That one rather than that one.
Enas: No, it can't roll.
Together: That one can roll (surprised).
Enas: No.
Together: It can't roll (disappointed).
Enas: That can roll.
Istra: Look, that one can roll.
Enas: But look. That can roll. .as well. That can roll, roll. Come here! It's that one now.
Istra: Does it roll in a straight line?

*Collected by Heather Jackson at Hallfield Infants' School, London, 1977.

has been a significant element in language teaching: linking names to real objects; miming; using gesture and illustrations to demonstrate meanings of actions, etc. Children often find it difficult to make sense of the sounds without the support of real objects. With support, even children who have had little contact with English can participate in the same activities as their English-speaking peers. The label "non-English speaking children" can sometimes lead us into judging children only by what they cannot do in their new language. We fail to draw on their previous learning experience and what they themselves bring to the work of learning.

The SLIPP Project has focused on particular kinds of talking contexts and activities—those which allow children to work together and share ideas and which provide children learning English with opportunities for hearing and rehearsing the same range of language several times. The most obvious areas in which these opportunities arise are stories, particularly repeating sentence stories, and songs. Less obvious perhaps are science and math investigations, and turn-taking games in which children work together. The activities involve children in following certain procedures several times.

In Example 4, a group is playing a relatively difficult game. They are asking for the picture cards they need without actually naming them. In the group is John, who is nearly 7 and speaks English; Dilip, who is 7 and speaks Tamil at home; Jayshree, 6½, who arrived from East Africa six months ago and speaks Gujarati; and Bholu, 5½, who speaks Punjabi. Bholu is the youngest in the group and the least experienced with English. The transcription begins near the end of their game.

In settings such as Example 4, native speakers of English tend to use the same range of language each time the procedures are followed. The strength for children learning English is that they gain access to patterns of English through involvement in the activity. Opportunities for hearing and using English arise as a by-product of the activity.

In Example 5, three children are investigating the bounce of balls made of different materials, on three different kinds of surfaces. Riaz, who is eight years old and speaks Portuguese, is working with Andrew and Antoinette who are English. The in-

Example 4*

Jayshree: John, have you got a animal that a policeman rides?
John: No, Jayshree, I'm sorry I haven't got it. Has anyone got a thing that people eat on. . .something that people eat on?
They have been asking round the group in turn. John now asks the question to the whole group.
Jayshree: I have.
John: Thank you. Jayshree.
Dilip: Has anyone got something that people go. .and. .a place. . .where people go and buy things from?
Dilip follows John's lead in asking the whole group, and in rephrasing question.
John: Yes, Dilip.
Dilip: Thank you.
Bholu: Has. . .any. . .Jayshree, have you got what Daddy drive on the road?
Attempts to follow John and Dilip but changes to his earlier question form.
Jayshree: Is. . .is it a car?
Bholu: Yes. Jayshree.
Jayshree: I haven't got it.

*Collected by Mary Christopher, Heber Primary School, London, 1977.

Example 5*

Antoinette:	I'm going to stick them. I'll get another one.	*It is not her turn.*
Riaz:	I stick it. I stick it.	*Insisting on his turn.*
Andrew:	He will stick them, Antoinette.	
Riaz:	*I* sticking.	*i.e. prepare a coil of masking tape for the sticker*
Antoinette:	I'll get another one ready.	
Riaz:	Miss. *I'm* sticking (indignantly)	*Fears he will lose his turn and appeals to the teacher.*
Teacher:	You're going to stick (agreeing). . .	*She then leaves them.*
(They begin the investigation with the sand)		
Riaz:	Red ball.	*Holding the marker ready for the red ball.*
Andrew:	Red ball. Now we're going to have the sand. Drop (to Antoinette)	*Smooths the sand.*
Riaz:	Drop.	
(Antoinette laughs because the ball did not bounce)		
Andrew:	Here you are.	*Points to lowest part of chart.* *Sticks marker on chart.*
Riaz:	Here	
(All laugh again)		
Antoinette:	It's jumped only on. .	*Probably about to refer back to its other bounces.*
Andrew:	Which one after?	*Picks up marker for sponge ball.*
Riaz:	This.	
Andrew:	That one (agreeing). The sponge. Let's see that. . .now, drop (to Antoinette)	
Riaz:	Drop.	*Antoinette drops it and it rolls off the sand.*
Andrew:	Now, do that again. It wasn't good. Do that again.	*It glances off the wall.*
Antoinette:	It's on the black line. . .the black line.	
Andrew:	No.	
Antoinette:	Yes, the black line.	*Riaz places the marker on the black line.*
Andrew:	On the black line.	*Agreeing with them.*
Antoinette:	Now the green ball.	
Riaz:	Green ball. No green ball.	*He has selected another marker.*
Antoinette:	(ignores him) See. (Drops the ball)	
Andrew:	Down the bottom.	
Riaz:	Here. (places marker). Now that, Plasticine ball (smiles in anticipation) Down there (places marker)	*Ball drops heavily into sand.*
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Teacher:	Let's see what you've done then.	*Returning to the group.*
Riaz:	This is strong (pointing to the chart) This is strong. This is strong. This is strong.	*Picks up the sponge ball and matches it to its marker.* *Puts ball back in box.*
Teacher:	Now. Riaz. Which ball bounced the highest?	
Riaz:	(pointing) That one.	
Teacher:	Which one is it? Tell me.	
Riaz:	This one (proferring the sponge ball). Sponge ball.	*He takes ball out of box.*
Andrew:	That's right.	*Agreeing with him.*

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*Collected by Maggie Speed at Hazelrigge Junior School, London, 1978.

vestigation is one of a number of activities linked to the theme "materials" which the class has been exploring. The group has observed and recorded the balls bouncing on the floor, then on a square of polystyrene, and are now testing the bounce on the sand. They are taking turns to drop the ball, watch for the height of bounce, and record the point of bounce on a chart with a marker. It is Riaz's turn to fix the markers on the chart. He is new to the class and has only recently arrived in the school.

Riaz is as engrossed as Andrew and Antoinette in doing the activity. He is much more rigorous in marking accurately the point of bounce. He had shown earlier that he understood the purpose of the investigation when he drew his teacher's attention to the highest bouncer on the wooden floor (the sponge ball) and that he could name the balls as well as indicate the point of the bounce. He participated fully, communicating what he meant to the other two. At this stage he was not able to join in the discussion about the causes of the ball's behavior on each surface but the investigation gave him a framework for thinking about that himself. The other two children (monolingual English speaking) also at times found it difficult to describe what was happening. What all three children need is more experience with describing the outcomes of the investigation, for listening to what others say, and for trying out the expressions for themselves. One way of providing more experience of this kind is by developing the investigation and engaging children in additional activities to extend their understanding of the scientific principles they are observing.

The Teacher's Role

It was earlier argued that we need to look again at what children and teachers are doing if we are to find a new way into second language teaching in the classroom. Most of the emphasis so far has been on the importance of interaction between children, yet we do not deny the crucial role a teacher plays in a child's cognitive and linguistic development. Unfortunately, the status of the teacher as an adult and the role as a figure of authority in the classroom can work against his or her capacity to directly influence a child's use of language. Children seem to be much more receptive to language of their peers. One way of influencing children is by temporarily discarding that status and role, and by working as a member of the group to affect the quality of interaction within it. Another way is to anticipate the linguistic demands of common curriculum activities, and as mentioned earlier, to set up activities where talking is needed and purposeful.

The organization of the classroom also crucially affects what it is possible to do. The teachers involved in the SLIPP Project thought about organization in three ways: the organization of curriculum activities into topics or themes; the organization and development of each activity, so that extra support can be provided for those children who need it; and the organization of groups in the classroom to build links between children, and to draw on the potential support they can offer each other.

Thematic or topic work gives children opportunities to follow ideas they are themselves interested in, and it allows teachers to organize more easily activities at different levels to match children's needs and skills as well as their interests. This is particularly important in linguistically diverse classrooms. A theme also can give cohesion both to the concept and the development of particular activities, and help children to see how these are related. Grouping children to work together in the multilingual classroom needs careful thought.

SLIPP teachers explored groupings that enabled minority and majority group children to draw on each other's experiences and expertise (for example, particular knowledge about aspects of a theme, models for ways of using English, life experiences). In planning the development of activities it became clear that there are stages in that development where special support for individuals can be provided if necessary. The framework in Figure 1 evolved through the work of the project. It has been helpful for thinking about the organization of activities in the classroom and the stages at which this extra support can be built into the development of activities, with particular benefit for bilingual children in the early stages of their learning of English.

Looking back to the examples, Marvan and Rowia were engaged at Level II (doing the activity); as were Ivanna, Carol, Rosemarie, and Stayce. Enas and Istra, and Antoinette, Riaz, and Andrew were engaged at Levels II and III (doing the activity and making a record).

The arrows on the diagram indicate that there is no need to work through all the levels with all the children. Level III, for example, is not always appropriate, and some children in some activities may have learned enough through the initial doing of an activity to move to new and more demanding activities in Level VI. But it is particularly Levels IV and V (interpreting the record, consolidating the task) which can offer children learning English the extra support and experience of the language which comes from revisiting the task. Level VII (drawing conclusions) is an important stage. The conclusions drawn will depend on the age and experience of the children, but reflecting on the results of the activity is as important as doing it.

Implications for Language Teachers

The new focus and the growing interest in the potential of the classroom as a context for second language learning has implications for the role of specialist language teachers. If the way of working that has been developed through the SLIPP Project is valid and possible in a school, it points to a new partnership between primary classroom teachers and specialist teachers. In many schools over the past few years, specialist teachers have been able to liaise with their colleagues, often in moments snatched from the day or after school. Ideally, some liaison time needs to be within school hours, so that in working with children together in the same classroom there can be a real sharing of expertise. If teachers can initiate activities at Levels II and III of the framework, then some of the development and further support at Levels IV and V might be pursued with children by the specialist teacher. The children in the groups need not necessarily be learners of English. Many already competent users of

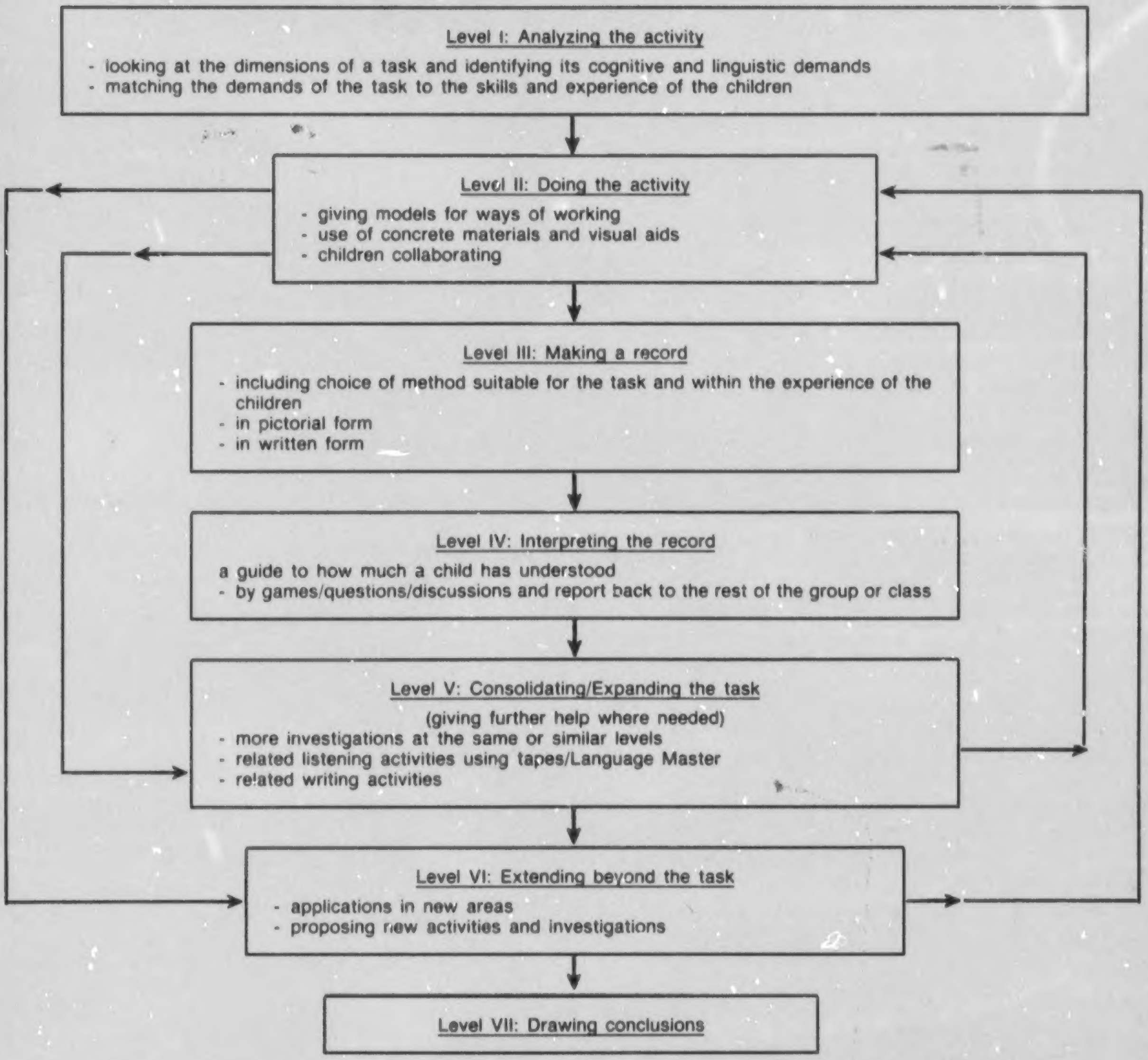
Level I: Analyzing the activity
- looking at the dimensions of a task and identifying its cognitive and linguistic demands
- matching the demands of the task to the skills and experience of the children
Level II: Doing the activity
- giving models for ways of working
- use of concrete materials and visual aids
- children collaborating
Level III: Making a record
- including choice of method suitable for the task and within the experience of the children
- in pictorial form
- in written form
Level IV: Interpreting the record
a guide to how much a child has understood
- by games/questions/discussions and report back to the rest of the group or class
Level V: Consolidating/Expanding the task
(giving further help where needed)
- more investigations at the same or similar levels
- related listening activities using tapes/Language Master
- related writing activities
Level VI: Extending beyond the task
- applications in new areas
- proposing new activities and investigations
Level VII: Drawing conclusions

Figure 1. A framework for planning support activities.

English will benefit from further explorations of an activity. The gain for children learning English will be the opportunities to work alongside and with English speaking peers.

Lastly, children learn English at very different rates; some need more time and attention than others. The language group teacher, as other specialist teachers, will always be needed; however, if the burden of being the person *solely* responsible for the English language development of minority children can be lifted, then it will be possible to look more closely at the needs of more advanced users of the language. Learning to use a language as competently as native speakers takes a long time. Children need continuing support for many years. With real collaboration between classroom teachers and specialist teachers, and with new initiatives to support minority group children in their use of their home languages, it may be possible to respond more effectively to their educational needs over the next decade.

The approaches described here make significant demands on a teacher's skills and sensitivity. Teachers must be concerned with:

1. giving models for ways of working when introducing new activities and investigations;
2. providing adequate visual support and access to real materials to enhance understanding;
3. working thematically so that a range of activities can be developed at difference levels;
4. knowing when and how to intervene to extend learning; and
5. being sensitive to the composition of groups so that relationships can be forged and developed through an activity.

Those ways of working are fundamental to primary practice. The presence of children learning English in the classroom highlights the need for them. If we can analyze the demands of a task, we can more successfully match it to the skills and experience of the children. For our children learning English, it will then be possible to start from the task and the language needed for it rather than from a graded list of language which is then applied to tasks.

Note

1. This and the subsequent examples come from *Language in the Multi-Ethnic Primary School*, Teachers Notes for Television Programs, produced by the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) TV Service for the ILEA and two Outer London boroughs at the request of the Department of Education and Science.

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Sarah Michaels

Listening and Responding: Hearing the Logic in Children's Classroom Narratives

As sociolinguists studying classroom interaction have shown, learning is not a simple transfer of knowledge from one individual (the teacher) to another (the student). Rather, learning is mediated through complex interactive and interpretive processes. Whether learning takes place is a function of the appropriateness of communication in particular contexts, in light of participants' discourse backgrounds and expectations (Gumperz & Herasimchuk, 1975; Erickson & Shultz, 1977; Philips, 1983). In order for teachers' or students' ideas to be assimilated and expanded, contributions must be highlighted in familiar ways, appropriately timed, and thematically tuned to the ongoing discourse and discourse activity (Erickson, 1982; Cazden & Michaels, 1983). In urban classrooms, where children may come from a variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, participants often do not share similar discourse strategies and norms for what counts as appropriate in a given context. In such situations, differences in discourse style and expectations create interactional constraints that make learning more difficult.

This article explores the issue of teachers' interpretation of children's language and ideas by looking at situations in an urban second grade classroom which demand fine-tuned listening and on-the-spot responding by the teacher to children from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Collaborative Exchanges in the Classroom

One characteristic of classroom communication is that teachers play an active role in controlling and sustaining dialogue. Through questions and directives, teachers can determine who talks, how long the child talks, and what general or specific topic is addressed. At the same time, through questions and comments, teachers can provide support and assistance to the child in expanding on a topic. When both teacher and child are correctly assessing one another's conversational intent and meaning, such exchanges often evidence a high degree of rhythmic synchrony and thematic cohesion, suggesting that both teacher and child are working together in developing a shared topic (Michaels, 1981).

One interactional pattern that can result in collaborative development of a topic (noted both in home and classroom interactions) is known as the "vertical construction" (Scollon & Scollon, 1982a). It can be characterized as follows: The child says something, is queried by an adult, and then provides new information as elaboration. Two important aspects of this kind of patterned exchange have been identified. First, the child's expansion is a result of interaction with another speaker, who provides an interactive focus for the new information. Through the statement/question/answer exchange, adult and child collaborate to produce a single, expanded message. Second, this kind of routinized exchange gives the child practice at being lexically explicit by packing progressively more new information into a

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single intonational phrase, and then into a series of such phrases. Scollon and Scollon (1982b) state: "In the decontextualized and constant pushing for upgrading of new information in utterances, caregivers are preparing the child for the patterns of discourse characteristic of literacy".[1]

In the classroom, collaborative exchanges in which the vertical construction is a frequent conversational pattern occur in activities such as small-group reading lessons, individual writing conferences, and oral discourse activities such as sharing time (also known as "show & tell" in some classrooms). In these exchanges, the child speaks (often in response to a teacher's question), is again queried by the teacher, and then adds more information in response to the question. Two examples of this kind of collaborative exchange appear in Figure 1. Both exchanges occur during a small-group reading lesson in a second grade classroom. The story being discussed involves an early space flight in which two monkeys are sent up in a rocket. Coincidentally, the lesson takes place on the same day as a space shuttle launch.

T: OK, Janine, what about this rocket ride? Is this the one that the astronauts are going to be taking today? Is it the same kind? (Janine shakes head "no.") How is it different?
J: Monkeys are in it.
T: Monkeys are in it. What will be in the rocket that's up today? The space shuttle.
J: Astronauts.
T: There'll be astronauts instead of monkeys. Good. OK. [45-second interlude during which three children working at their seats are reprimanded for talking and another child is helped in finding a book.] OK, are we all looking at page 129?
All: Yes.
T: And Janine has just told us that the difference between today's space shuttle and this rocket ride was what, Janine? [4-second pause.] Who's going up today, and who went up in this story?
→J: Astronauts.
→T: Tell me about that.
→J: The astronauts went up today.
→T: And in this story . . . [said as if speaking for Janine, telling her how to continue.]
→J: In this story the monkeys went up.
T: OK, very good. Monkeys went up instead.

• • •

T: OK, can you tell us about their coming back to earth? Tell us about that part. How do they do it? How do they get back? [3-second pause.] They're way out there in space, traveling at a very high speed. Paul, how do they get back?
→P: They used their parachute. They went down into the water.
→T: Tell me more about that. You mean they put a parachute on the monkeys?
→P: They used the parachute on the, on the rocket and went, went down into the water.
T: Very good.

Figure 1: Two examples of the use of vertical construction.

Two features of the exchanges in Figure 1 are notable. First, the child's expansion results from the support—interactionally and thematically—provided by the teacher. Through a sequence of questions and answers, teacher and child produce a single message. (Arrows in the transcript indicate these sequences.) Second, this kind of exchange gives the child practice at being lexically precise and integrating more information into a single syntactic unit. In Figure 1, compare Paul's original two-sentence turn, "They used their parachute. They went down into the water," with his elaborated and syntactically more complex single sentence: "They used the parachute on the rocket and. . .went down into the water."

Teacher/Child Collaboration at Sharing Time

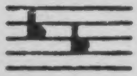
Sharing time is a nearly universal speech event in preschool and early elementary school classrooms that typically generates a great deal of connected talk from children and teacher collaboration with children about their topic. In a year long research project (1981-1982), Courtney Cazden and I, with our research team at Harvard, studied sharing time activities (henceforth ST) in four primary school classrooms in the Boston area. In all but one of the classrooms, the teacher played an active role, addressing questions and comments to the child sharing, trying to help the child be lexically explicit in clarifying and expanding his or her discourse. ST could thus be seen as a potential "oral preparation for literacy."[2]

I will suggest that ST as a teacher-run school event is organized with certain institutionalized goals and interactive constraints which influence the stories children tell, as well as the ways stories are heard and responded to, on the spot, by participating teachers. Because of these institutionalized constraints, not all children gain equal access to the teacher's help at ST.

The data presented here are taken from a second grade, ethnically mixed classroom, one of the four classrooms studied in the Boston-area ST project. The analysis is based on 131 ST turns recorded during 15 ST sessions over the course of the 1981-1982 school year. In this classroom, ST was a daily activity in which children were called upon (by a child-leader) to give an account of some past or future event, or talk about an object brought from home. The teacher played an active, pivotal role as listener/responder, addressing questions and comments to the child sharing or the audience at large, trying to help the child clarify and expand his or her discourse, or to link the child's personal topic to more general classroom themes or experiences. ST turns thus had both a monologic (child-structured), and dialogic (collaborative) component.

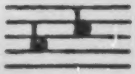
Sharing Time as a Unique Speech Event

ST in this classroom is marked as a routinized activity in several ways. It is opened by the child-leader (a different child each week), who stands in front of the class and says:

Sharing
Time (e.g., )

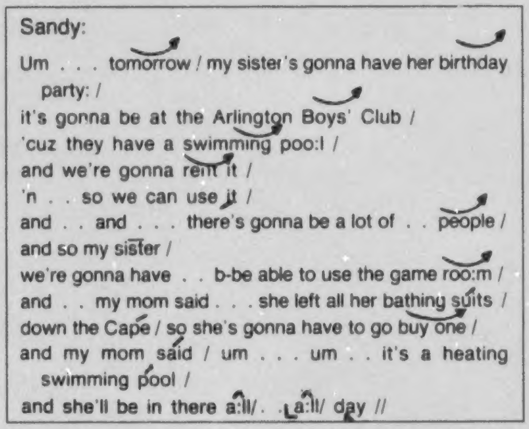
—using sustained level tones at an interval of a minor third, a stylized contour that has been traditionally referred to as the "calling contour" (as in "dinner time"). Ladd (1980) has recently put forward an alternative analysis of this contour, saying, "what is signalled by this intonation is the implication that the message is in some sense predictable, stylized, part of a stereotyped exchange or announcement" (p. 137). Such an analysis accounts well for its use in this context, where children are already present and attending to the speaker when the contour is used.

The child-leader also nominates children to share with a stylized contour, saying,

Jerry or Sandy (e.g., )

which, notably, is the stylized "sharing time" contour played upside down. Interestingly, the teacher does not use this contour in called on children at ST or other times of the day.

That the children sharing see this activity as a completely unique speech event is evidenced by the use of a formulaic intonation pattern which clearly marks their discourse as "sharing time talk." This "sharing intonation" (henceforth SI) is an integral feature of their discourse and occurs in no other classroom speech activity.[3] The intonation contour, in its most pronounced form, is a high rising tone with vowel elongation, stretching over the last word or two of a tone group (or complete intonational phrase), resulting in sharp pitch modulations, and a slowed, rhythmic tempo. The accompanying utterance is often a syntactically complete independent clause where an adult would more likely use falling intonation. Figure 2 illustrates the melodic contour of ST intonation.[4]



Sandy:
Um . . . tomorrow / my sister's gonna have her birthday party: /
it's gonna be at the Arlington Boys' Club /
'cuz they have a swimming poo:l /
and we're gonna rent it /
'n . . so we can use it /
and . . and . . . there's gonna be a lot of . . people /
and so my sister /
we're gonna have . . b-be able to use the game roo:m /
and . . my mom said . . . she left all her bathing suits /
down the Cape / so she's gonna have to go buy one /
and my mom said / um . . . um . . it's a heating swimming pool /
and she'll be in there a:ll/ . . a:ll/ day //

Figure 2. An example of the melodic contour of sharing time intonation.

Rising arrows indicate the SI contour. As the transcript indicates, SI does not accompany each tone group. It does, however, segment the text into a series of information units of varying complexity, ranging from a single word, "tomorrow," in a single tone group, to the larger, syntactically complex information unit "and . . my mom said / . . . she left all her bathing suits / down the Cape / so she's gonna have to go buy one/" (containing 4 minor tone groups, each ending in a rising tone).

In this classroom, black and white children use the same stylized rise at sharing time. There are, however, ethnic differences with respect to how extensively this marked contour is used and where it occurs in the narrative account. SI accounts for over 60 percent of the tonal contours in the white children's narratives and is used by some white children in over 80 percent of all tone groups, often in its most exaggerated form. This stylized rise is generally found marking off information units throughout the account with no falling tones occurring until the closing (as above). In contrast, SI contours account for only 37 percent of the tones in the black children's ST accounts, and in longer turns (of a half minute or more), the contour is likely to be used at the beginning, then fall away, replaced by contoured or falling tones, and then resume at various places in the story.

Children's Narrative Styles

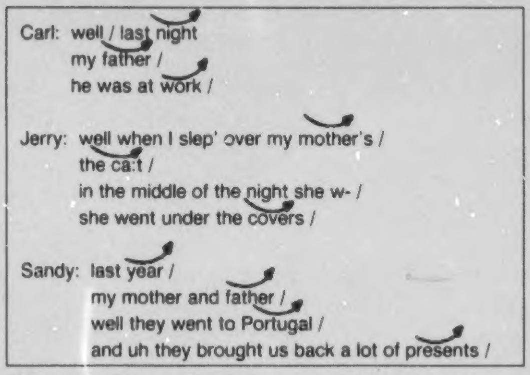
Related to these differences in intonation are notable contrasts with respect to black and white children's preferred strategies for structuring a narrative account. The example in Figure 2 is representative of the style used predominantly by the white children, a style I have called "topic centered," accounting for 96 percent of the white children's turns. This is tightly structured discourse on a single topic or series of closely related topics, with lexically explicit referential, temporal, and spatial relationships. The ST turn in Figure 2, for example, evidences a high degree of lexical cohesion through nominal and anaphoric chains ("swimming pool," "rent *it*," "use *it*," "heating swimming pool").

In addition, there is a high degree of thematic cohesion in that key terms relate to a familiar cultural institution and its sponsored activities ("Boys' Club," "swimming pool," "game room," "bathing suits," etc.). Thematic progression is achieved through a kind of *topicalization* whereby key nouns are mentioned and then turned into pronouns and commented on (e.g., "birthday party" in line 1 becomes "it's" in line 2; "Arlington Boys' Club" in line 2 becomes "they" in line 3, and so on). The discourse also shows evidence of internal patterning of certain segments or parts, punctuated syntactically by units of "and . . . so," with SI contours throughout the account until the closing which is marked by lowered pitch and falling tones.

Characteristically, topic centered turns begin with a temporal reference, (here, "tomorrow"), a statement of the focus ("my sister's birthday party"), and some indication of place ("the Arlington Boys' Club"). This information is made salient through tone grouping and pausing, highlighted with marked SI, and generally appears in the first four tone groups. This patterned format accounts for approximately 92 percent of all topic centered turns. Figure 3 gives several other examples of this formatted opening.

What follows this orientation is some sort of elaboration on the topic (which provides complicating action, or additional descriptive information), with no major shifts in temporal orientation or thematic focus. Sharing intonation marks continuity, signaling "more to come" (and does indeed, in most cases, ward off comments from the teacher), and then leads directly to a punch line sort of resolution, signaled by markedly lowered pitch and falling tones.

SI for these children serves to highlight key orienting information and marks thematic continuity. These stylized tonal contours serve as a melodic structure for the child in organizing a narrative account. At the same time, they serve as a reliable interpretive guide for the listener—provided the listener has certain *conventionalized* expectations about ST narrative structure, i.e., is expecting orienting information at the beginning and brief thematic elaboration which leads quickly to a resolution. In this case, this conventionalized format closely matches the teacher's expressed concerns for ST accounts, reflected in her questions asking for temporal clarity and spatial grounding when that information is not explicitly provided at the outset. With children who use this style, the teacher is very successful at picking up on the child's topic and extending it through questions and comments.



Carl: well / last night
my father /
he was at work /

Jerry: well when I slep' over my mother's /
the ca:t /
in the middle of the night she w- /
she went under the covers /

Sandy: last year /
my mother and father /
well they went to Portugal /
and uh they brought us back a lot of presents /

Figure 3. The patterned opening format.

In contrast, only 34 percent of the black children's ST turns can be characterized as topic centered (and only 27 percent of the black girls' turns). These children are more likely to tell narratives using what I have called a "topic associating" style. This refers to discourse consisting of a series of implicitly associated anecdotal segments, with no explicit statement of an overall theme or point. Temporal orientation, location, and focus often shifts across segments but the segments themselves are linked implicitly to a topical event or theme. Segmental shifts are signaled through shifts in pitch contouring and tempo, often accompanied by a time marker. "Yesterday," "last night," "tomorrow," etc., may occur more than once in the same turn—each time accompanied by stylized SI. While segmental shifts are systematically signaled, this kind of discourse is difficult to follow for those who, like the teacher, expect the narrative to focus on a single topic. It gives the impression of having no beginning, middle, or end, no obvious structure, and hence no point. The structure is there, or course, if one is expecting and listening for multiple segments. Figure 4 is an example of one such story.

Leona:
ˌOn ˌGeorge ˌWashington's birthday /
I'm goin' / ic̄e: / my grandmother /
we never um / ˌhaven't seen her since a long
ti:me /
and / . . . and she lives right (n) nea:r u:s /
and / . . . sh̄e: / and she's gonna /
I'm gonna spend the night over her hóuse /
acc.
and / . . . ˈevery weekend / she comes to take
mé /
like on Saturdays and Súndays / awa:y / from
ho:me /
and I spend the night over her hóuse /
acc.
and one day I spoi:led her di:nner /
. . . um and we was having um / we was / um
ˈshe ˈpaid ten dollars /
and I got eggs / . . . and ˈstuff /
and I ˌdidn't ˌeven ˌeat ˌanything //

Figure 4. An example of the topic associating style.

Leona begins with a temporal indicator and a future tense orientation, using SI tempo and contours. She marks the end of this segment with increased tempo in line 6, "I'm gonna spend the night over her house." The second segment begins with a shift in temporal perspective—from the future to the iterative ("every weekend")—with a resumption of SI tempo and continued SI contours. This segment ends with increased tempo in line 9, a lexical and prosodic repetition of line 6, "spend the night over her house." Played side by side, these two phrases are indistinguishable, an implicit signal of the association across these segments. What they have in common is the fact that on both the holiday *and* the weekend, Leona spends the night at her grandmother's. The third segment shifts to a particular occasion, and shifts focus to dinner, rounding the story out to a close, again highlighting Leona's relationship with her grandmother by recounting an episode in which there was a breach in the relationship. The closing is marked with staccato rhythm and falling tones.

Two things about this story are notable. One is that temporal markers with SI contouring recur at the beginning of each segment. In topic centered accounts, there is an average of 1 temporal indicator per turn. In topic associating accounts, temporal indicators average 3.9 per turn, ranging from 2 to 8. Secondly, and this is even more obvious in some of the longer topic associating turns, SI (tempo and contouring) is used not to mark continuity, but to highlight discontinuity, marking the separation of narrative segments and a shift in temporal orientation, location, or focus.

Adults' Responses to Children's Accounts

In order to study these differences in a more systematic fashion, Courtney Cazden and I recently conducted a pilot experiment in which mimicked versions of children's topic-centered and topic-associating turns are played to black and white adult informants, all graduate students at Harvard. These mimicked versions maintain the child's rhythm and intonation contours, while systematically changing black dialect grammatical features to standard English, and changing obvious social class indicators (like "down the Cape") to neutral ones. The adult informants are asked to comment on the form of the story, and to make evaluative statements as to the probable academic success of the child telling the story.

Responding to Leona's "Grandmother" story, white adults are uniformly negative with comments such as: "terrible story, incoherent"; "hard to follow"; "mixed up"; "not a story at all, in the sense of describing something that happened"; "doesn't connect"; "this kid hops from one thing to the next." When asked to make a judgment about this child's probable academic standing, they uniformly rate her below children who told topic centered accounts, saying, for example, "This child might have trouble reading if she doesn't understand what constitutes a story." Some refer to "language problems" affecting school achievement and others suggest that "family problems" or "emotional problems" might hold this child back.

By contrast, black informants (a restricted sample of five at this point) find the story well formed, easy to understand, and interesting, "with lots of detail and description." Three select it as the best story of the five they heard. All five comment on "shifts," "associations," or the "non-linear" quality of the story, but none appear to be thrown by this. Two of the informants explicitly expand on what the child means, saying that the holiday is *just like* the weekend because there's no school and it's an occasion when she gets to visit her grandmother—the implicit point here being her grandmother is an important figure in her life. In addition, all but one of the black informants rate the child as highly verbal. very bright, or successful in school. One informant comments on her "good language skills" which should provide "good language experience for writing."

The differences between the black and white adults' evaluations of this child as a *student* are especially striking in light of the fact that the informants' judgments are based solely on a ST narrative which contains no features identifying the child as black or white. It is also worth noting that the black informants positively evaluate both topic associating and topic centered stories, something that should be investigated further, both experimentally and in the classroom with black teachers.

Returning now to the classroom teacher at ST, she, more like our white informants, has difficulties making sense out of topic associating narrative accounts and responding appropriately, both in timing and in content. There are more interruptive overlaps and probes as to the facts of the account, often serving to cut short rather than build upon the child's narrative intentions. In interviews, the teacher refers to one black child in this classroom as a "tall tale teller" on the basis of her very long and complex ST accounts, and because, in response to the teacher's challenges about the "facts," she would on occasion contradict herself. The teacher notes that many of these turns leave her wondering who did what when, and that she finds it "hard to make connections."

Conclusion

While both black and white children in this class use sharing intonation strategically, the teacher is better able to follow these cues in topic centered discourse because these turns meet her expectations about where certain information should be located and how a topic should be developed. As the pilot experiment suggests, it is harder to hear and appreciate the structure in discourse if it is not the kind of structure you are expecting.

The problem, though, has institutional implications. Because of the teacher's evaluative role, sharing time activities generally reflect the teacher's expectations. In order to be considered competent, children must conform to the teacher's implicit expectations as to how information should be organized and presented. Competence then becomes narrowly defined. If teachers can't hear the structure or logic in a child's story, they are generally inclined (as we all are) to assume it isn't there, that the talk is rambling, unplanned, or incoherent. Such negative judgments and the academic inferences that often follow can lead to differential treatment and misevaluation of children in this and other classroom activities.

Notes

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1. In studies of parent/child interaction in highly literate, middle class families, interactive routines with frequent vertical constructions, such as picture book reading, questioning games, or collaboratively produced bedtime stories, have been variously discussed by Ninio & Bruner (1978), Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz (1976), Scollon & Scollon (1982a), Heath (1982), and others. Through these routines, children are prepared for the demands of literate discourse in a variety of ways. They learn literate syntactic construction, lexical formulas, and ways to organize information by using explicit lexical connectives such as "on the other hand," "although," "consequently," and so on. Over time, many children acquire a reading register, which prepares them for the standard clausal and sentential prosody of written texts, which is characterized by rising tones before a comma and falling tones before a period. Bolinger (1975) called these features the "unmarked stress pattern" of standard written prose (p. 603). Children also may become acquainted with literate strategies for "fictionalization of self" (Scollon & Scollon, 1982a), by means of which a narrator distances himself or herself from the audience and immediate context. Most important, perhaps, they become accustomed to the vertical construction itself. This pattern of collaborative expansion carries over into the classroom and characterizes the interactive structure of many formal and informal school activities, through which the skills of literacy are taught.

It is important to note, however, that the vertical construction, used commonly in middle class, highly literate families, may not be widely used in families of other ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, such as the Athabaskan Indians studied by Scollon & Scollon (1982b), rural Appalachian blacks (Heath, 1982), Warm Springs American Indians (Philips, 1983) and inner-city blacks (as suggested tentatively by Erickson, 1982). Other patterns of interaction which serve the same expansive function may be used among these various groups. Further ethnographic research in the home is needed to identify alternative interactive patterns that could also be used in the classroom in developing children's oral language skills.

2. In one of the four Boston area classrooms, the children ran ST by themselves, without the help or even presence of the teacher. See Michaels & Foster (in press) for a description of this event.

3. The exception to this general rule was one occasion where a child told a narrative account to the whole class and shifted into SI, thus seeming to reinterpret the context as a kind of sharing time.

4. Prosodic and paralinguistic cues are transcribed using a system developed by John Gumperz and his collaborators, based on the work of John Trim. In this system, speech sequences are first divided into tone groups or intonational phrases. A phrase can be marked by a minor, non-final boundary, "/" (indicating "more to come"), or a major or final boundary, "//". Within a tone group we indicate: (1) location of the tonal nucleus (that is, the syllable or syllables marked by change in pitch) as: " ˎ " low fall, " ˋ " high fall, " ˏ " low rise, " ˊ " high rise; (2) other accented syllables in the tone group: " ˈ " high, " ˌ " low; (3) paralinguistic features such as (a) pausing: ". ." indicating a break in timing and ". . ." indicating a measurable pause, (b) speech rate: "acc." indicating accelerating tempo and "ret." indicating slowing down, (c) shift to high pitch register " ⌈ " or shift to low pitch register " L " (both applying to entire tone group). Doubling of one of the above symbols indicates extra emphasis.

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tip

Peggy G. Lazarus

What Children Know and Teach about Language Competence

Children know, use, and teach others considerably more about language than we sometimes recognize. Rarely is this communicative competence adequately revealed in their performance on tests and seldom is it apparent for many children in formal instructional situations. According to Ervin-Tripp (1969), "Competence in speaking includes the ability to use appropriate speech for the circumstances, and when deviating from what is normal to convey what is intended." This broad definition includes communication in informal as well as formal situations and creative strategies to convey the speaker's purposes. Applied to a classroom, communicative competence includes not just speech used for teacher purposes, but also that used for student purposes.

Teachers can, of course, be only selectively aware of children's abilities. Their judgments are affected by children's test performances (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), student responses during lessons (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), and the congruence of the child's style with particular educational goals (Michaels & Cook-Gumperz, 1979). For some teachers, curriculum guides determine the competencies of children to which they are bound to attend. In addition, the exigencies of directing a classroom preclude the teachers' consideration of competencies children might be displaying in less formal activities. If, however, teachers could become more aware of other competencies important to children for success in the daily life of the school day, they could foster the acquisition of those competencies.

Until recently, most educational research did not address the question of students' communicative competence as broadly defined. There was, as Brophy and Evertson (1978) suggest, a preoccupation with teacher behavior as opposed to student performance. When student behaviors were examined, it was their display in formal lessons that was investigated (Bremme & Erickson, 1977; Green & Wallat, 1981; McDermott, 1976; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

More recently, the approach has been to determine children's communicative competence in peer interaction. Ability in these studies was analyzed in terms of specific speech acts in particular activities (Cook- Gumperz & Corsaro, 1976; Cooper, Marquis, & Ayers-Lopez, 1982; Garvey, 1977; Genishi & Di Paolo, 1982; Newman, 1978; Wilkinson & Calculator, 1982). But still missing was a framework that would highlight children's communicative competence across all the speech events of the school day. Identification of the range of individual competencies throughout whole sessions as revealed in spontaneous speech would greatly enhance our evaluation of performance in particular speech events. Several large-scale studies have adopted more comprehensive frameworks. (See the review, "Research on Teaching as a Linguistic Process: A State of the Art," by Green, 1983.)

The research on which this article is based (Lazarus, 1981) was designed to discover communicative competencies of children which had not previously been identified or given sufficient rec-

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ognition. Kindergarten children were the focus, in anticipation of providing a base-line of competencies on which teachers and school researchers could build. The language production of one kindergarten class throughout whole sessions was audio-taped. The analysis was based upon the transcripts of the tapes, log-notes (to identify speakers and situations), school records, and frequent informal interviews with the teacher. Language protocols or examples were separately compiled for each child based upon their talk which could be identified via the log-notes. The transcripts of children's language were repeatedly reviewed for emergent categories which were distributed across four areas: sociolinguistic, linguistic, social, and cognitive. This article reports children's communicative competence in the sociolinguistic area.

Communicative Competence

The framework used to identify communicative competence in formal and informal school situations was provided by Hymes (1972). He delineated the components of the ways people speak under the acronym, SPEAKING, as adapted below:

S: Setting—time, place, the physical circumstances
Scene—the psychological setting
P: The speaker or sender, addressor; hearer or receiver, audience
E: Ends—outcomes and goals from the perspective of both group and individual
A: Act Sequence—includes message form and message content
K: Key—the tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done
I: Instrumentalities—channels (e.g., written, oral, including singing or whispering) and forms of speech (codes, varieties, registers)
N: Norms—rules of interaction and interpretation (not interrupting, turn-taking, use of normal voice, etc.)
G: Genres—categories such as poem, myth, tale, etc.

Within the sociolinguistic area, Lazarus (1981) identified three categories of children's competencies: (a) metalinguistic awareness of regularities in language use; (b) ability to make public a confusion or a problem; and (c) the artful variation of the components of the "ways of speaking" (Hymes, 1972) to accomplish a purpose.

Awareness of Regularities

Address forms. A pattern of addressee forms according to the relationship of the participants, which is part of the politeness aspect of our norms of interaction, is delineated by one child in response to another's surprise:

Ka: Did you see my mother go by? . . . Her name is Marie.
Ch^1: Marie?
Ka: But you guys call her Mrs. Jones, 'cept for the big people. I call her "mother" 'cause she's my mother.

Terms of endearment and family appellations are freely used during house-play and are varied humorously during arrival time and at departure. However, during work time, several children question their appropriateness. Appropriate use of these forms depends on the scene and the children's definition of what is going on at the time. Thus, when a mother is helping the children with a difficult weaving task, the following exchange occurs.

Ta: Does this, does it have to go under or over?
Mrs. C: Well. . .It's your choice. It's after that that you don't get a choice. Helping you sweetie.
Ta: . . .Sweetie? [high-low intonation]
Mrs. C: I shouldn't have called you that, should I . . . I call everybody that—boys and girls.

Yet the same child, Tammy, during the draw-and-tell task, produces a familiar term to which another child takes exception:

Ta: Sorry darling.
Tr: (laughs) I'm not your husband.

These children are therefore aware of a sociolinguistic regularity, that the form of address depends on the situation.

Greetings. Awareness of a pattern of greeting is demonstrated by many children. The index to this awareness is the shift to a joking key. During arrival time, exchanges such as "Hi, grandma, Hi, sissy, Hi, poppa" are common. During committee time, one child, seemingly bored with his assignment, initiates a long greeting exchange which finally devolves into an interesting conversation. His variations in the addressee slot include: Hi Brian, Sir Lion; Hi Pupu Sir; Hi snowflake, Hi, Hicco, Hi, Turkey.

Question-answer sequence. That some children are aware of another regularity, the form of classroom question-answer sequence, is also indicated by a shift to the humorous key. They play with the message form. When Tracy, breathing hard, enters the school building, Joe initiates the following sequence:

Jo: Did you run?
Tr: Yeah.
Jo: On your bottom?
Ka: On your head?
Jo: On your nose? On your feet?
Tr: On my feet.
Jo: Oh, on your feet.
Ka: Where's your feet?
Tr: Down there. [points]
Jo: No, your feet are up here [points up, laughs]
Ka: Yeah, there they are.

Joe and Kathy play with the question-answer sequence, but Tracy responds literally.

Situated conventional directives. The children understand the teacher's use of situated conventional directives: statements or questions which are to be interpreted in the situation as commands. There are some, but few, errors. Competence is indicated, moreover, in the student's production of situated conventional directives for their own purposes. For example, Amber, as support for her right to watch another committee, claims that it is clean-up time. Moreover, Tracy manipulates the situated conventional directive for his own purposes: He has been trying to get Erna's toy. Suddenly he says, "It's clean-up time" and he grabs the toy. Then, toy in hand, Tracy says, "It's not up to the 12, right?" Erna shows her awareness of his ploy with, "No come on, you tricked us. . . I know your trick. You (just said) it's clean-up time because. . ."

The children are aware that certain words are not to be used in school. Breach of this convention brings threats to call the teacher, demonstrating an awareness of a class regularity: Certain words are inappropriate for the situation.

Recall of discourse. Children show competence in the recall of previous discourse, signifying again their awareness of language. For example, during snack time, the teacher says "Just one per customer." Sharon chimes in with, "You always say that." Indeed, review of earlier transcripts confirm this repetition. Similarly, when the teacher commiserates with a child, "It's rather sad, isn't it, when someone you love dies," Tracy comments, "Once you said that to Carmen." The teacher agrees, saying, "Yes, Carmen's great-grandfather died right before Christmas. That's sad, too, isn't it."

Of course, many children are aware of their own previous statements. During sharing time, many speakers object to repetitive questions with "I already told you that." During group time, "I said it first" and "that's what I said" are frequent comments. However, during work time, children often insist that their partners repeat exactly what has been said. An elaborate instance of this occurs at the sand table:

Be: If you need any gushy wushy water, just tell me . . .
Ka: I need some more water.
Be: Say "gushy wushy water."
Ka: Gushy water, some more, please.
Be: You already got yours . . .
Ka: I need some water, please. What is the name of the water?
Be: Gushy wushy. Say, "May I please have some gushy wushy water?"
Ka: May I please have some gushy wushy water?
Be: Sure you can.

These examples demonstrate a competence: awareness of the precise form of a message.

Norms of interaction. The children often comment on the norms of interaction for classroom talk. They say "Just use a normal voice," "use an inside voice," "take your fingers out of your mouth." They object to interruptions: "Kathy was talking," "I can't hear, if everybody's talking." They are frequently aware of who talks and when, "Carmen always has a question." When the teacher is introducing the new structure for sharing time, Sharon knows who talks:

T: . . . when we have sharing time, guess who does a lot of talking?
Sh: You!

Moreover, during the final structure, two children describe their conception of the teacher's role:

Tr: I—I thought you meant on sharing time, you—you weren't going to talk.
Sh: How come the teacher talks?

These examples indicate that many of the kindergarten children reflect on the regularities of language as used in the classroom and have an ability to adapt school language to their own ends. We turn next to another type of competency, the ability to make public a confusion or a problem.

Publicizing Confusions

It is clear from the transcripts that kindergarten children confront many problems. A useful verbal strategy is an announcement of the problem, such as "my zipper's stuck." This strategy leads to a solution—timely assistance. Such statements of confusion indicate competence as they provoke clarification or assistance.

Gauging audience membership. Sometimes children show confusion about when to talk and who is being addressed. According to Hymes, participants in an interaction include the speaker, the addressee, and the audience including both intended and unintended hearers. The kindergarten children frequently fail to understand their roles as unintended hearers when the teacher addresses the whole group with remarks targeted to a few. The teacher's goal appears to be compliance. Yet the children who have already complied, or don't need to, frequently comment:

T: So please try to keep the scissors in the right place.
Ch: But I always put them away.

The teacher usually ends sharing time with "Put your sharing things away." To this cue, children reply:

Am: Then I'll put my skirt in my cubby hole. (laughs)
Sh: Ok. I'll take off my clothes.
Je: I can't put—how can I take off my jump-suit?

The last comment causes the teacher to amend her request with "unless you're wearing it," but the children continue:

Ch: OK, then I'll have to take off my head.
Ch: And I will put my teeth away.
Sh: Shall I put my hair in my cubby hole?

In another instance, the teacher, at the end of arrival time, attempts to hurry the children to the group meeting area by asking Tracy to return some binoculars to their owner. She simultaneously cautions Joseph and Wyman, who are waiting for a turn, that time has run out. This complicated speech act is confusing to Stanley:

T: Can you give those back to Adler for a few minutes; Joe, Wyman.
St: Joe and Wyman can't give those.

These examples demonstrate that middle-class, native-English speaking kindergarten children find some of the participation structures of the classroom problematic. This problem has been well documented for children from other cultures and economic groups.

Expectation of newness in discourse. Another confusion which many students make public is an expectation that conversations even in school should highlight new, not old information. The index for this confusion is a jarring "I know."

T: You're back. How are you?
Br: I know. I was sick.
T: I'm so glad.

Here, Brent's "I know" refers to "You're back," a statement of the obvious. Likewise, the teacher's final remark, "I'm so glad," cannot be a response to "I was sick" but can be interpreted as a completion of the thought which motivates stating the obvious.

There are several examples of children's objections to being told information they already know from the draw-and-tell task. Each child has been told to instruct another in drawing something. The listener often complains. For instance:

Ni: . . . You need to make the sky blue.
Ad: I know, Nigel. Are you silly? 'Cause I know what color a sky is.

Sharing time contributions, especially in the first structure, frequently elicit this complaint.

Jo: The arms can come off and so can the cape.
Tr: I knew that.
Jo: So can the arms.
Ch: (mockingly) Then his arms.
Jo: Then his knucklehead.
Ch: (laughter)

Joe switches here to a humorous key—a response, I believe, to the audience's objections to having the obvious stated.

Soliciting help. Children in the group also use language to ask for help, particularly in reading. A competency with the written channel is the ability to shift from private, silent reading to public, oral reading when a difficulty arises. This is a shift to knowledgeable peers or adults as intended hearers. Among the kindergarten children are several who announce problems with letter names, words on wall charts, toys, log-notes, library cards, and sentences on their drawings, or in books. These are all voluntarily chosen reading tasks. Moreover, many such announcements occur outside periods of direct reading or reading readiness instruction, during arrival time, transition times, and work time. For instance, Erna comments while showing a drawing from home during arrival time, "I didn't have letters in it 'cause I can't, can't read." Then she shows the reverse side of the page on which she has, indeed, written letters. The teacher immediately launches into a letter identification lesson, showing that publicizing confusions can lead to appropriate assistance. This competency has been examined by others, for instance the "service-like events" during reading groups described by Merritt (1982).

Variation of the Components of Ways of Speaking

The kindergarten children's communicative competence is most dramatically revealed by their artful variation of the components of ways of speaking to convey or mask their intent. Intent, here, is to be considered as being continuously constructed during an exchange. Since a single statement may derive from several simultaneous intentions, interpretation of intent rests upon the consequences of the statement as opposed to the assignment of a single anterior motive (Streeck, 1980).

Rescuing following errors. Children make shifts in content and style to rescue themselves following various kinds of errors. Those shifts indicate their awareness of misstatements or inappropriate ways of talking. Shifts included moving to a teasing genre or to a humorous word play as well as shifts in role and in forms of speech. A shift in content, for example, is used by Brent in conversation with his teacher. He displays considerable knowledge about oceans but right after a mistake, he shifts the topic:

Br: I think the Pacific.
T: That's exactly right. It's the biggest ocean in the world.
Br: I know, but that's the ocean the Statue of Liberty's on.
T: No. The Statue of Liberty's on the Atlantic.
Br: Oh, yeah. But streams attach on to oceans.

Another rescue involves a shift of the form of speech. One child uses a Donald Duck voice to question my log-note activity. She says:

Be: What are you doing? (Dramatic voice, high, low, low, low, high intonation)
P2: Writing down what you say.
Be: That's what the baby asked.

Perhaps Betty used the Donald Duck register and the baby ascription to mask her intent to ask a possibly inappropriate question.

Getting the audience attention. During arrival time, some children manage to get the attention of the teacher to report their news easily. Others indicate that they have difficulty, or expect difficulty, in getting an audience. One solution is the use of exaggerated starts as an attention-getter. Thus Amber, in two different sessions, produces: "Teacher, guess what, once I was . . ." and "Shut your eyes. Open them." From other children we find:

Wm: You wouldn't believe what I brang.
T: What did you bring?
Br: I got Silver. Know what I got in here? Silver.
T: Hey, isn't he terrific.

Exaggerated starts, or a shift in message form, succeed for these children. In one instance, however, silence is also effective. Jessica is the least frequent contributor to the arrival time exchanges. With Jessica, the teacher initiates a topic. Silence as an attention-getter deserves further research across different populations with different teachers.

Getting the attention of the audience is partly accomplished during sharing time by turn-allocation procedures and the operation of established norms of interaction for that event. Maintaining audience interest, however, is problematic. Sharing time presents the main opportunity for children to address the peer audience. Their concern for listeners' reactions occurs across speech events, i.e., arrival time, group time, transition time. Upon arrival, many children excitedly show their objects to the teacher. But Stanley worries, "I have something to share that nobody might want to see." And Tammy whispers to me, "I got a present for the teacher . . . Want to know what it is? Well, don't tell her."

Sharon shows her item to Betty, but then resists showing it to others with the statement, "Why do I have to show it to everyone when it's a secret?" Another time, Sharon pretends she is going to share a new hair style, hidden beneath her cap. This ruse continues as Sharon wears her cap throughout arrival, transition, and group activities. The ruse is exposed at sharing time with a triumphant "There" followed by an explanation of her mother's purchase of the special hat.

Many children keep their items in paper bags, pockets, or behind their backs. Maintaining secrecy involves selecting a few from the many possible hearers, or shifting to a whispering mode, or using nonverbal concealment tactics. Yet the teacher has never counseled secrecy. It would seem that the children's goals for sharing time differ substantially from the teacher's. For the secretive children, the goal seems to be to please the peer audience; whereas the teacher's stated goal is to extend and elaborate children's language (first structure) and to increase children's opportunity to talk (second structure). Secrecy is one way to heighten interest. Children also maintain attention during sharing time by shifts of content, key, and genre. These indicate a communicative competency, attending to audience reaction.

Obtaining possession of an object: directives. We cannot judge the range of a child's school communicative competency with directives without consideration of his/her production throughout the school day. What we would need to know is whether an individual unsuccessful in one kind of task is able to produce well-formed requests in other school situations. The following example suggests they can and in fact are mastering a repertoire of politeness strategies.

Ke: This is poison. I stirring stuff up. You have to cooperate with us. You give us whatever I need because of my two long teeth . . . Cooperate! You have to cooperate or the teacher will get very upset.
Ca: I know, but we need this . . . Kenneth, if I, if I let you on my side, would you let me play with these two and you play with these two?
Ke: Sure.
Ca: Thanks a lot.
Ke: Yeah, but if I need something, you have to give me it. Remember, I'm Dracula.
Ca: Kenneth, I don't like you playing that.
Ke: Then I shouldn't be Dracula.
Ca: I need a—I need a toy for it. I guess you shouldn't have. Guess why? I don't like you.
Ke: If you don't like me, I won't bring you no present like I was next Christmas.
Ca: I don't need no present from you.
Ke: Know what's going to be? A necklace . . . You'd love this kind of necklace. Some is cats and some is birds.
Ca: I like diamonds.
Ke: You also have a diamond.
Ca: Well, listen, Kenneth, I was over here first.

Kenneth and Carmen have used shifts of key and the negative and positive politeness strategies: stating the face threatening act as a general rule or threat, impersonalization, conventional indirection, reciprocity, a positive face threat, and a bribe. All this variation of form occurs among partners for whom status relations are partially controlled by the situation. Different variations of form can be expected if the participants are of unequal status, such as between teacher and child.

Conclusion

Kindergarten children demonstrate a wide range of communicative competencies, which may be considered in terms of three categories: awareness of regularities in the use of language in the classroom; ability to publicize confusions; and artful variations of the components of ways of speaking for children's purposes. As the examples from the Lazarus (1981) study indicate, children are aware of the regularities in address forms, greetings, question-answer sequencing, and the norms of interaction of the classroom. They adopt classroom language patterns for their own purposes. Publicizing confusions is considered a competency in that it frequently elicits an explanation. The identified confusions involve problems with reading; expectation of newness in discourse when much of school language relates to old, rather than new, content; and understanding their role as unintended hearers when teachers target a subgroup for their remarks.

Kindergarten children vary the components of speech to accomplish their own purposes. They are able to rescue themselves following errors, and to get and maintain the attention of both the teacher and their peer audience. In some cases, the teacher's goals are in conflict with the child's. The teacher's goals for sharing time may include extensions and elaborations and promoting conversation; old content is acceptable. The children may demand new and interesting content. This disparity of goals presents a problem for researchers also. Further research needs to be addressed to school children's communicative competence in informal as well as formal displays.

Notes

1. *Ch* is used to indicate an unidentified child.
2. *P* stands for "participant observer."

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tip

Cheryl Rappaport Liebling

Creating the Classroom's Communicative Context: How Teachers and Microcomputers Can Help

Everyone has a story to tell. The question is whether they'll tell it to you.[1]

Encouraging children to share their ideas, feelings, and perceptions within the classroom is not always an easy task. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges a teacher faces is to create a classroom communicative context within which students are motivated to share meaningful experiences. Teachers addressing this challenge are now developing classroom activities which reflect those features of parent-child interaction at home believed to provide substantial scaffolding for children learning to communicate. In this article I suggest that negotiation of meaning can be further enhanced when interactive microcomputer-based writing and reading activities are incorporated into the classroom's communicative context.

First, I will briefly identify key aspects of the home environment which facilitate language acquisition and describe innovative ways in which these aspects are being translated into school activities. Second, I will discuss prototypical software under development which may actually expand the communicative potential of the classroom.

The Home's Conversational Context

An important question for teachers to ask themselves is whether their classrooms contain the kinds of communicative features which often characterize home environments. Research on the home as a linguistic environment reveals that mothers and fathers share meaning with their children by using speech styles adapted to the child's level of language development as well as nonlinguistic meaning cues. Snow (1977), for example, has detailed maternal speech addressed to infants as marked by short, simple sentences spoken slowly and correctly. More recently, Rondal (1980) has shown that fathers' speech to very young children may be more lexically diverse than that of mothers, but it too is simplified with respect to utterance length.

Nonlinguistic features of the home setting also contribute to the relative ease with which parents and children share meaning. Parent-child talk at home characteristically occurs within a face-to-face conversational context in which parents and children rely not only on linguistic choices but associated paralinguistic and extralinguistic cues to convey meaning (Rubin, 1980a). The availability of both prosodic devices and situational features as support for linguistic choices in the social, interactive home setting helps parents and children make their thoughts, feelings, and intentions clear. Very young children appear to rely heavily on these kinds of nonlinguistic cues in producing and comprehending language (Halliday, 1975; Scollon, 1976). As children naturally become able to express meaning and understand others, they begin to free the linguistic aspects of messages from the surrounding cues, letting the nonlinguistic elements serve as background information for message clarification (Liebling, 1981).

Mothers and fathers also rely on these features to negotiate meaning with their children. Snow and

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Ferguson (1977), for example, comment that mothers use a good deal of repetition and stress to highlight words and important concepts.

Perhaps the most critical feature of the home as a conversational context is its potential to encourage interaction and involvement of parents and children. Through spoken language parents are able to engage their children directly in discussions of personal experience. This sharing of daily experience at home becomes the foundation for long-lasting social relationships established through communication.

One way to establish strong relationships is by listening to what our conversational partners say and responding on the basis of perceived intent. Parents and children may not always understand one another's meaning, but they strive to make sense of language choices in the communicative context. Whenever they share experience by discussing daily events, storytelling, creating texts and art, singing, dramatizing familiar tales, or reading, they have an opportunity to interact and become involved. When the reading of a text is combined with discussion, for example, the spoken language context facilitates the sharing of the written text's meaning. Parents who engage in these kinds of activities soon recognize they are most successful in achieving their social and communicative goals when they provide feedback on effective communication by accepting, enlarging, and enriching the child's expression of meaning.

The home as a linguistic environment, thus, is characterized by both linguistic and nonlinguistic elements which provide substantial support for children learning to share meaning with others. The home's potential for communication may not always be realized, but it can serve as a model for the classroom's communicative context.

The Classroom's Communicative Context

While some classrooms do not serve as social, interactive, communicative settings (Dryson, 1982a; Fox, 1983), there are many teachers who do surround new reading and writing experiences with a conversational context similar to that of the home. A classroom communicative context derived from the home's conversational environment provides an essential link between the development of communicative competence at home and literacy in the classroom.

Creating classroom communicative environments modeled after the home environment requires consideration of the strengths inherent in parent-child interaction. Taking the time to talk and listen to children describe their personal experiences, encouraging children to practice using language by engaging in a variety of language experiences, focusing on sharing meaning rather than errors made, and using language as a way to enjoy the social relationships we establish are important aspects of parent-child communication which can readily be incorporated into teacher-child classroom interaction. Most important, however, the process of becoming literate can be perceived as parallel to that of acquiring one's native language. Both occur gradually and naturally as children become acclimated to the sharing of experience through language.

How can facilitating aspects of the home's conversational context be translated into school activities? Recent efforts by teachers to incorporate the strengths of parent-child dialogue at home and promote the development of "natural literacy" (Teale, 1982) within the classroom have resulted in school activities in which spoken language surrounds a child's early efforts to write and read. Of particular interest are activities in which very young children become authors. Advocates of early writing maintain that encouraging children to write within an integrated spoken and written language context helps children sense the obstacles all authors face in sharing meaning with readers (Dryson, 1982b, 1983; Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1983).

Throughout preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school, young children can become acclimated to written language by authoring texts. Although the definition of *text* is initially loose, Egan's (1983) description of the development of writing capabilities by children at her school in Canterbury, New Hampshire, provides compelling evidence that natural literacy begins very early. Egan notes that child-initiated writing in the classroom's writing center evolves from signed drawings given meaning by spoken language and representational drawings (whose subjects are chosen prior to drawing) to the early addition of single letters or lines to represent the written message. Gradually, children begin to label parts of drawings with letter sequences that are often invented versions of correct spellings. Arising from labels comes an interest in writing phrases and sentences and a demonstrated awareness of sound/symbol relationships, sight vocabulary, and even of discourse units themselves by attending to, for example, the spacing of words.

Given the time to practice sharing meaning through writing and a teacher who offers encouragement in the child's efforts to share personal experience with others, young children quickly become capable of taking themselves through the entire writing process—planning, composing, and eventually, rewriting. Through "publishing" narratives or expository text for others to read, sending messages to friends and relatives, and keeping journals or diaries, even very young children produce meaningful written texts.

Comprehending written texts can be approached in a similar manner, not as drill, but as an activity in which the reader is trying to establish a social relationship with the writer by understanding the writer's message. To this end, Blackburn's first grade classroom in Somersworth, New Hampshire, in which Graves and Hansen (1983) conducted research, utilizes the "author's chair." The author's chair is an exciting addition to the writing center and facilitates the transfer of spoken language communicative competence to successful reading comprehension. It is the place where children or teachers sit when they are role-playing an author reading her book aloud to others. Who is the real author? Sometimes it is a trade book or basal reader writer. Sometimes it is the teacher if she is writing in the classroom. Sometimes it is one of the children. The children's published writing is given equal status with that of adult authors so that children learn how their own writing has an audience, just as adult writing does.

In effect, the person who sits in the author's chair and reads to the group becomes the real author. During the reading, the "author" is free to comment on the text, pose questions, and engage in discussion with the audience. After the reading, the author engages the audience in a discussion of the book's merits and tries to clarify misunderstandings. Discussion between writers and readers provides a spoken language context for understanding the meaning of written texts. Within this setting, writers and readers become speakers and listeners who establish social relationships through language choices and associated prosodic and situational meaning cues. The writer/speaker and reader/listener interact in a conversational context to provide feedback on interpretation of meaning and pose questions to clarify points of view.

These types of language experiences help create social, interactive classrooms and extend the home's conversational setting into the school. They represent innovative approaches in integrating spoken language communicative competence and literacy in reading and writing.

Using Microcomputers in the Classroom

We have seen that a classroom's communicative environment can be improved when teachers draw upon the strengths of the home's conversational context. Early literacy experiences occurring within a spoken language setting seem to facilitate a child's willingness to share meaning. Even within this environment, however, not all children are sufficiently motivated to communicate. What tools can be used to further enhance the classroom's communicative potential?

The integration of spoken and written language in today's classroom need not be limited by exclusive reliance on paper and pencil or audiovisual aids. A growing number of classroom teachers now recognize that there are many reasons for introducing young children to microcomputers. First, electronic technology has vastly altered the way information is gathered, stored, displayed, and formatted. Providing early exposure to microcomputers within the classroom enlarges our definition of literacy (Compaine, 1983) as it lays the foundation for future use of technology in a wide range of work situations. Second, the ability to use a computer does not minimize the importance of learning to write and read. To the contrary, the new technology complements print (Lucy, 1983) by providing exposure to yet another form of written language. Early exposure to microcomputers can help children acquire basic literacy skills.

Finally, the microcomputer's most significant contribution may well be to expand the classroom's communicative context. Set within a social, interactive environment, microcomputers can become a highly motivating and interest-provoking source for classroom communication.

The successful use of microcomputers in the classroom begins by establishing software selection criteria. The reasons microcomputers can be useful in the classroom point the way toward these criteria. Does the software promote computer literacy? Does it help children acquire basic literacy skills? Does it expand the classroom's communicative potential?

Unfortunately, much of the software currently available consists of drill and practice exercises in which the computer serves as a consultant who knows all the right answers (Bradley, 1982; Collins, 1984; Schwartz, 1982; Shostak, 1982; Woodruff, 1982). This type of software may help individual students who need concentrated practice on specific skills and, indirectly, contribute to computer literacy. It is not likely, however, to expand the classroom's communicative potential.

With the notable exception of LOGO, the children's programming language, software which meets the above criteria is not readily available. Prototypical software, however, is currently being piloted and disseminated throughout the United States. Recently developed interactive writing and reading activities, for example, enable children to both initiate and control writing activities as they plan, compose, and revise text prior to publication as well as to focus on the structure and content of narratives. Such activities may help expand the communicative potential of the classroom by enabling children to create texts in ways that are not possible without the technology.

One example of interactive software is *Story Maker* (Rubin, 1980b, 1982; Collins, 1984). *Story Maker* enhances the classroom's communicative context because it helps children concentrate on the structure and content of narratives rather than the mechanical aspects of writing. The activities fulfill this objective by using an interesting and motivating format ideally suited to computer technology. *Story Maker* is considered "interactive" because the child remains in control of the reading and writing activity and is an active partner in producing the text. A child using *Story Maker* has an opportunity to simultaneously play the roles of writer and reader as stories are created from structural branches of a story tree.

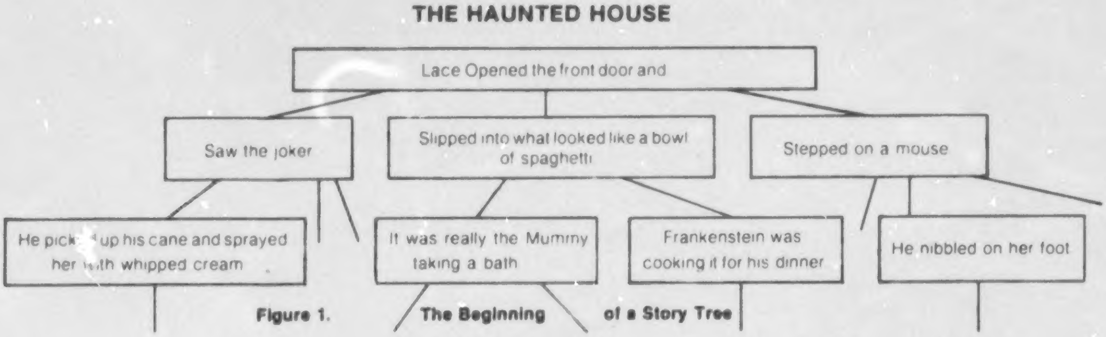
THE HAUNTED HOUSE
Lace Opened the front door and
Saw the joker
Slipped into what looked like a bowl of spaghetti
Stepped on a mouse
He picked up his cane and sprayed her with whipped cream
It was really the Mummy taking a bath
Frankenstein was cooking it for his dinner
He nibbled on her foot

Figure 1. The Beginning of a Story Tree

Figure 1 displays an example of the beginning of a tree for a story entitled "The Haunted House." The children create the story on the basis of branches selected. At any time they can request to see where the branch selection falls in the overall tree structure, make new choices, and then read the complete text, or get help if they do not know what to do next. Throughout text production, the computer interacts by providing such messages as "WAIT" when new information is added to existing text or "OK" when the children are free to continue.

A third grader created the following text using "The Haunted House" tree structure:

> Lace opened the front door and slipped into what looked like a big bowl of spaghetti. It was really the mummy taking a bath. The mummy grabbed Lace. She slipped out of his arms. Lace stood up and her dress fell off. She opened a closet door and saw a witch's outfit hanging there. Lace put on the black clothes and ran out of the house. She met the scarecrow, Toto, Tinman, and the lion skipping down the yellow brick road. Then she heard a loud thundering noise behind her; it was the flying monkey motorcycles! Lace then realized that the costume was magic. She had turned into the witch from "The Wiz."

A student can create a number of different story lines, depending upon the branches selected. Actual choices made affect both the flow of the story and the outcome. This particular tree is designed, however, to ensure that the story will be logical in its completed version. As understanding of story structure develops, the child's choices become related to communicative purpose and ease of reader comprehension. Working in pairs or small groups is encouraged so that students are able to share the meaning of the written text within a conversational context.

In a second activity, the child asks the computer for a goal and chooses branches which are evaluated with respect to achievement of that goal. *Story Maker Maker*, the last activity, enables children to add their own story parts to a story tree. These additions are stored for future use by other children.

A second example of interactive software is QUILL (Bruce & Rubin, in press; Rubin, Bruce, & the QUILL project, in press). QUILL activities encompass the prewriting/planning, composing/drafting, revising/editing, and publishing components of the writing process. The software can be incorporated into an instructional program designed with respect to language arts curriculum objectives and adapted for virtually any content or subject.

Prewriting activities include teacher or student-prepared planners which help children generate ideas for composition. Teachers select topics which are meaningful to the children and prepare an overall framework in which the children develop text. For example, a sixth grade teacher in Hartford, Connecticut, developed the following PLANNER on seed planting as part of a science unit.

- TYPE OF PLANT
  Beans
- DESCRIBE THE SEEDS
  Dicot
- TIME UNTIL GERMINATION
  It took about three days
- SEED: MONOCOT OR DICOT?
  Dicot
- TIME UNTIL MATURITY
  About a week or less
- OBSERVE: LEAF STRUCTURE
  It's a monocot its leaves feel funny
- OBSERVE: STEM STRUCTURE
  Feel scratchie, long
- VARIABLE: (LIGHT, WATER, SOIL)
  . . . experiment it needs lots of water, soil, light
- WHAT PLANT PART IS EDIBLE? DESCRIBE
  A long thing called the pod
- PLANT GROWN TO PRODUCE SEEDS? DESCRIBE
  No but soon it will

Reading and writing, as well as spoken language, are integrated throughout the prewriting stage. Before the children use this planner, for example, they both read books to gain background knowledge on the topic and actually plant seeds to observe what happens. When it is time to prepare the composition, the children use their own comments in response to planner topics in formulating main ideas and details, structural organization, and point of view. It should be noted that planning need not be done in isolation. Often pairs or small groups of children share knowledge by joint planning either at the computer or at their desks.

Composing activities follow when a child is ready to draft a text. Attention is now directed to developing a sense of audience and purpose as the text is organized. QUILL provides two types of communicative environments. The LIBRARY is an environment in which children share meaning by exchanging information. Classes can create encyclopedias of expository writing on various subjects such as plants, insects, or cultural customs as well as narratives and poetry. Fifth graders in Easton, Massachusetts, recently wrote the following narrative and poem on their classroom's microcomputer.

Lester Lightbulb
Julie Smith Amy Langlais

Watt's that?, I hear people say. Many folks are not too bright. They don't realize that I'm Lester Lightbulb. I turn people on. I light up the room and never leave anyone in the dark. I have 100 watts while some of my cousins have only 40 or 60 watts.

Do you know that I am important to this world? I shine light on everybody. Did you know that I am in your television set? You probably have me on right now. You see I am very useful to you and everybody in the world. There are millions of lightbulbs like me all over the world. So let me light up your life.

Keywords: /pretend/lightbulb/

Haiku
Julie Smith

We go round and round.
Hot cocoa is boiling.
Now we are racing.

Keywords: /haiku/cocoa/

As with planning, composing need not be done in isolation. The narrative above was composed by two girls working together. A text can either be drafted at the children's desks and then entered jointly, or composed directly on the computer. One child serves as typist while the other reads it aloud, often offering editing suggestions along the way. Invariably, the composing process becomes one in which writing, reading, and spoken language are naturally integrated. Having composed a selection, the authors then provide keywords and a title by which they can share their writing with others.

Many children perceive the composing process as more enjoyable when text is created at the computer. When fifth graders compared writing on the computer to paper and pencil tasks, the children favored the computer because, for example, "It's much quicker and more fun" or "It's more interesting and less work."

A second communicative environment is MAILBAG, an electronic mail system. MAILBAG is an environment in which children must attend to their audience by sending messages to peers and adults. MAILBAG helps children realize that written language, as spoken language, has as its primary purpose communication with others. Two fourth graders in Brookline, Massachusetts, recently sent these messages to one another.

To-Ben

Mauwi Mauricio

Ben do you think I should get Space Invaders or Quest for The Rings? Can you come over today? Hope you can! Here's a riddle for you. If an athlete gets athlete's foot, what does an astronaut get? Give you the awser when you tipe me a message. But you also have to take a guess. Bye Bye Ben. Oh by the way you won't get the awnser from any of my joke books!

keywords: /To-Ben/

Ode to Mauricio

Bennie Ben

Dear Mauricio I think you should get Quest for The Rings because Space Invadors on Oddyesy stinks! Sorry, but I cannot come to your house today I have to work on autobiography, get new shoes and go to a party. Sorry! As for your riddle...Meteors Foot? Sorry I can't come over! Bye, Bye!

keywords: /To-Mauricio/

The intent of MAILBAG is to encourage the sharing of meaning between people. Messages can be sent in the form of letters, memos, or invitations, and addressed to pen pals, individuals with secret code-names, special interest club members, or to a public "bulletin board."

Revision of drafts occurs with the help of a child-oriented text editor (Levin, Boruta, & Vasconcellos, in press). Children often comment that they are willing to attempt revision using the microcomputer because it is easier to delete, add, rearrange, or alter the text. When the amount of recopying is reduced, thus averting frustration and tediousness, revision becomes a more enjoyable process. Likewise, when there are no punishments for revision, children begin to take the time to think about what they really want to share and, with the aid of peer and teacher feedback, edit for meaning.

Like planning and composing, revising drafts need not be done alone. Peers as well as teachers and children hold conferences to provide feedback on the text's strengths and to identify inherent problems. For example, in a sixth grade class a child was writing a text about "Mario's Girlfriend" and didn't know where to place the apostrophe. In spontaneously conferencing with her friend, the child decided to look up the rule in her language textbook. She and her friend generated the revision themselves in a meaningful context. Once problems like this are identified, revision strategies can be developed based either on an individual's needs or on class language arts objectives. If, for example, the teacher stresses lexical choice or discourse structure in a given week's formal language instruction, the text revision strategy can also highlight that particular instructional objective.

When a text is completed, it is time to share it with others. Sharing writing is much easier if the text is neat and legible. QUILL's publication system enables children to publish final copy which not only looks good, but is correctly formatted for particular kinds of writing, e.g., newspapers, books, letters, and memos. In addition, with the aid of a line printer children can easily produce multiple copies of text for distribution.

Sharing completed texts, whether composed with the computer or not, is an essential component of the classroom's communicative context. Now it is time to surround the writing with spoken language as writers and readers engage in such integrated language experiences as the author's chair noted earlier. Incorporating computer technology into the classroom's communicative context need not alter the underlying social, interactive principles upon which classroom communication is based. The emphasis can continue to be on establishing parallels between the ways children as writers and readers share meaning and the interaction patterns of speakers and listeners established years earlier in the home.

Conclusion

We have seen that the home's conversational context itself has the potential to encourage children to share their thoughts and feelings through spoken language. It is this sharing of meaning in a supportive setting that is the strength of the home as a communicative context. Teachers can help extend the sharing of meaning at home by creating classroom environments in which written language experiences and microcomputer-based writing and reading activities are surrounded by familiar spoken language.

The communicative contexts which parents and teachers create influence the extent to which children are willing to share personal experience with others. A child who is not motivated to share meaning through language tells us we must work harder to establish truly communicative environments. One who enthusiastically uses language to share meaning, however, shows us her/his language competence has developed in a rich social and interactive setting. Parent-child dialogue at home, integrated spoken and written language experiences at school, and the inclusion of interactive microcomputer-based activities within the classroom all contribute to the creation of communicative contexts which encourage the meaningful exchange of ideas and emotions.

Notes

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1. Rosen, H. As quoted by D. Graves in *Children's reading and writing*. Lecture delivered at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, March 10, 1983.

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Nancy Gaines Platt

How One Classroom Gives Access to Meaning

Children's early, fragmentary writing is often a challenge to understand. Even if the words can be read, they may not make sense unless the reader has been there, sharing the child's experience. Consider first grade Sam's story:

> We tasted well Water and We saw a boar
> and the straw has to be on a hard floor . . .

Sam writes about experiences which are important to him, but he has not sufficiently recapitulated their background—the who, what, where, and when of the event—to enable the reader to fully understand. His written language is a free-floating commentary unanchored to any explicit topic. It is intended for his classmates and teacher who shared his recent experience of spending a day at a farm.

The focus of this article is on the way language is embedded in the life of the classroom, and beyond, in the lives of families and communities that inevitably become a part of the classroom world. The important events of classroom and family life show up first, if fleetingly, in the talk of children and their peers, family members, and teachers. Meaningful first hand experiences, shared and "talked over" with friends and interested adults give children something to think about and to express to themselves and others. Children use various means to represent these experiences—play, art, drama, and music—but a primary means is language, talking and writing. Writing that emerges from classroom experiences such as a trip to the farm reflects the content of the trip, the participants involved, the purpose and skill of the writer, and the intended audience. Thus, in the early stages at least, writing is more readily accessible to readers who have shared this context.

Living contexts as they affect language use are comprised of three interdependent but distinct dimensions: (a) content or subject matter, (b) interpersonal relationships, and (c) symbolic means of representing meaning, such as speech, writing, painting, or dancing. These interacting elements are described by Halliday (1974) as the *field, tenor*, and *mode* of discourse. The purpose of this paper is to show how these three elements of classroom context influence *what* children write, *why* they write, and for *whom* they write. Halliday's three dimensions of context will be described as they appear to operate within a particular first/second grade classroom of children who were observed over a two-year period.[1]

The informal nature of this classroom is evident in its non-institutional furnishings—soft chairs, a braided rug, hanging plants—and in its small areas for reading, art, math, and science. Children use this environment informally, working together, moving freely, and handling materials actively. Such a setting blends familiar, homelike features with those which lead out to a wider world.

The contrast between the familiar and the new becomes evident when the physical setting is analyzed in terms of the teacher's use of time, space, and materials. This same contrast of familiarity and novelty also characterizes the underlying dimensions of field, tenor, and mode. In each dimension,

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the teacher accepts what is familiar and childlike, while at the same time she encourages what is new. Her choice of subject matter, the interpersonal relationships she establishes, and the allowance for various forms of symbolic representation provide a dynamic balance between the world of early childhood and that of formal learning. Children live within the resulting "context of culture" (Malinowski, 1923) without being aware of these three separate dimensions. They simply enjoy "doing things with friends," and later draw, sing, dance, talk, and write about these experiences.

Context of the Classroom

One of a number of broad, continuing themes in this classroom is that of birth and growth. Many studies contribute to this theme—brine shrimp, caterpillars, chicks, a toad in the terrarium, and a visit to a farm. These studies will be used to illustrate the concepts of field, tenor, and mode in operation in this classroom context. Within each dimension, some aspects are familiar, concrete, and informal, while others are new, more abstract, and formal.

Field of Discourse

Field is used to mean the ways in which children experience content or subject matter—the ways in which they encounter the world or selected bits of it. This is influenced by the teacher's stance toward the world of knowledge and children's personal learning. Essentially, she decides whether children are to memorize according to others' abstract categories of knowledge or are allowed to categorize their own experience, alongside the teacher, recreating culture together (Bruner, 1982).

In this classroom children have many chances to encounter content directly and actively, without regard for formal subject matter categories. This approach, based in the familiar and concrete, provided readiness for more abstract learning, as seen in the following four aspects of *field.*

Here and now content. Here and now experiences on the sensory level are the bases for more abstract and remote content. Children encounter the world at close range when they watch chicks emerge, hold them, and then talk and even sing to them. These activities provide a foundation for the understanding of new, more abstract investigations, such as comparing the embryos of chicks, fish, and humans, and thinking abstractly about stages of development across species.

Redundancy. Many different themes recur during the school year, providing the necessary experiences from which children gradually construct general concepts. Through their work with brine shrimp, caterpillars, seeds, plants, and chicks, for example, children observe that all these living things grow and develop, each in its own way.

Other kinds of redundancy make the study of new content predictable and understandable. Children learn that theme studies involve certain standard approaches. They expect to contribute items to a display table, to volunteer words for a vocabulary chart, to explore materials, and to make things. During a study children have many chances to process the same ideas in different ways. They not only soak and plant seeds, they also label pots, record seed experiments, and plan, plant, visit, and report on their class garden. They draw on this content as well as on stories to make their own retellings and dramatizations, as they did, for instance, with *The Great Big Enormous Radish* (after A. Tolstoi, 1969. *The Great Big Enormous Turnip.* New York: Watts). The second graders, last year's first graders, are accustomed to these procedures, and indeed, to many of the same activities.

Yet each year is different. The trip to the farm is different in detail the second year, as are the projects that come out of it. Not all studies are repeated: shells one year, brine shrimp the next. In general, variation is inherent in the dynamic, changing, suspenseful, unpredictable nature of these materials. Which butterfly will emerge next and what will it do? These are unknowable and absorbing questions to children. Thus, within a strong texture of familiar repetition, there is variation, surprise, and novelty.

Integration across subject matter lines. Children experience content without regard for formal disciplinary lines. The trip to the farm involves them in math, language, art, music, biology, agriculture, and social studies, without their awareness. Instead they remain focused on their life at a level of direct, whole experience, which cuts across these lines.

Yet within this integrated experience there is a gradual recognition of more formal categories of knowledge. Sustained group studies represent a higher level of organization than individual sensory experience. Reading and discussing "informational books" means children are thinking about such biological phenomena as chicks, plants, and eggs. Specific lessons in math, spelling, and handwriting indicate increasing formality, signaled also by the permanent signs marking off domains of writing, reading, art, science, and math. The appearance of content from the chick theme within a spelling test is evidence of the gradualness of this transition:

Teacher: *Cries.* The little chick's cries could be heard all over the room. *Cries.*
Mary: See, there they go!
Teacher: They stick their heads up and they look out.

Active, purposeful learning. The teacher selects experiences which fit children's natural, active, early patterns of learning. They seem deeply involved in these experiences, having "taken on" the teacher's purposes as their own. Children also have more formal, verbal experiences, as they listen, read, and write over sustained periods of time, using language to learn, order, classify, record, and represent. Pairs of children follow a systematic procedure in turning and weighing their shared eggs, then recording the results on a chart. Others represent their experience by writing stories, reports, and books.

However, the advent of more formal experiences does not preclude the continuation of concrete, active learning. Rather, its continued availability helps to support new kinds of learning. Children seek symbols of the more abstract processes. First grade Betsy reads me the news article she wrote about the chicks, taking me over to the incubator for the reading since "it belongs there." When Duncan and Roger write an article about an author, they move their chairs next to the display of his books, even though not actively referring to them.

Thus, children use familiar ways of learning about the world as they meet it through experiences the teacher "puts in their way." These experiences support new opportunities for more formal approaches to content.

Tenor of Discourse

Tenor refers to interpersonal relationships, particularly with regard to questions of power, intimacy, and role. Does the teacher share her power, giving children some decision-making responsibility? Does she mitigate power differences by establishing intimacy through shared experiences (Cazden, 1976)? Does she encourage children to cooperate or to compete?

This teacher uses the power of her role to assure security and to encourage independence. Thus she provides both familiar and new ways of relating to others. Shared experiences and cooperation foster intimacy and familiarity; decision making by children encourages independence and growth. Five aspects of the tenor of discourse in this room are described next.

Family grouping. The grouping of first and second grade children in one classroom provides considerable security and support for the less experienced learners. Since the second graders already know something about caterpillars, seeds, plants, and so on, and moreover are accustomed to the learning procedures used in the classroom, they become resources for the first graders, and for their teacher, who can draw on this experience. In these respects, the classroom operates as a cohesive family whose members support each other and share interests and needs.

In another sense, however, the classroom is not a family. Considerably larger than a family, it is also part of a larger social unit, a school, with its own rules and schedules. Thus children face new social experiences, since interpersonal relationships and communication have a certain formality not typical of family life.

The teacher's quasi-parental role. Like a parent, the teacher's authority is taken for granted. Also like a parent, she is supportive. She helps children deal with the larger school and assists them in expressing their meaning. She steers their ventures into abstract learning with her tone of voice and her words.

Unlike a parent, however, the teacher never hugs children and at times talks and acts very formally with them. She believes children need to learn to be independent, to make choices, and to work out problems.

Sense of community. Cooperative activities, both planned and spontaneous, are encouraged. Children are members first of one small group and then of another—writing newsletter articles, measuring off an acre, developing a play together. Thus, social networks as well as networks of ideas are built over time, and experiences of small groups are incorporated into the experiences of the whole class. These shared experiences facilitate talking and writing since children can understand and be understood without recreating the whole body of meaning on which their language rests. For example, when a small group returns from the class garden, it can report what is new without explaining the entire garden project.

The teacher fosters these overlapping networks, weaving connections between ideas and people, between past and present. She helps children remember: "What else did you get to pet at the farm?" She joins children's names to their past experiences and ideas. In commenting on the appearance of a bean sprout, she says, "Polly and I thought it [the sprout] looked like a little pig's tail." In all of these instances children's individual places are secured in a network of people, experiences, and ideas which extend back in time and memory.

There is evidence that the children and their teacher value this shared experience. When looking at photographs from last year, children respond by remembering *who* was doing *what* that day. "This was of Hannah doing a report and Trudy watching her," says Betsy. A photo of last year's farm display brings this from Mary: "This is when we went back to the Little People's Farm . . ." and she explains the display.

The fact that such work is displayed shows that it is valued. Small events such as the respectful handing back of old work or the careful salvaging of someone's sprouting seed found on the floor are further evidence.

While the teacher's goal is to establish a familial sense of community, she also wants to give children the experience of acting independently in a broader community. Working in small groups gives children practice in living together in more complex and diverse environments than a home. In the classroom, they need to coordinate their lives with others, sharing time and space, working out conflicts, and thereby gaining experience in coping with and reconciling difficulties (Rosen & Rosen, 1973).

The teacher also encourages children's independence in writing about individual, unshared meanings by providing a common base of experiences which need not be recapitulated in anyone's composition. Duncan, having especially enjoyed watching a mother sow and her piglets, extends the farm trip by learning more about pigs. When he returns to the classroom, he reads and writes about the various uses of different parts of a pig—a small venture, perhaps, but a step beyond the shared experience that supported his effort.

Authority. Children accept the teacher's authority, participating in her social order without question. Many comments made during interviews convey this impression. "Every time you study something like seeds, do you have to do a project?" was answered, "Well, when the teacher tells us to."

Children also have to learn how to speak and act with others in authority—the principal, other teachers, and the secretary. Peers, too, carry authority, as children are given responsibility for self-direction within small groups. While the teacher remains in the background, children can be heard to invoke unwritten rules: "The reading center is for reading, not for doing Chinese jump rope," or "If you pick up a chick to hold it, you should be sitting down so the chick won't fall."

Decision making. Even though many activities are required, children make decisions within these requirements. During worktime they decide where to work, whether alongside a friend or alone, which work to do first, and even whether or not to do an "option." Indeed, children sometimes choose to pause in the midst of activity and dream. All children read during reading conference time, but they choose their own books. During observations all observe and write, but each chooses his or her own focus. A farm project is required of all, but these can take a variety of forms—from informational reports to stick puppets of animals. In general, then, children are free to regulate their own activity, as in early childhood, and to create a comfortable learning situation which fits their own rhythms and patterns.

However, this freedom is tempered by a new responsibility to adjust to the needs of others. In spite of a homelike environment, there are more constraints than in less formal neighborhood and family groups. Children have to share space, materials, and time. They are expected to cooperate and to solve problems independently. Thus, they are learning to fit into social patterns, even within a homelike setting which tolerates their individual approximations and self-regulation.

Mode of Discourse

Mode stands for the means of representation and communication available in the classroom, both verbal and nonverbal. First, what verbal means are available? Are children encouraged to talk informally, initiating their own ideas and developing their own meanings? Or does the teacher direct the agenda of interaction in lessons according to predictable patterns as described by some researchers? What parts of the writing process are children responsible for? Do they choose their topics and words and manage their own transcription? Is talk a recognized part of this process, before, during, and after writing? Second, are nonverbal alternatives available to express meanings? That is, are art, music, and drama valued as appropriate means for representation? Finally, do children often represent meaning in *several* ways, verbally as well as nonverbally?

In this classroom it is assumed that children can discover and represent their own meanings in talk, writing, and other visual and artistic forms. However, they are also encouraged to develop a new, more formal way of using written language. This shift toward explicitness and conscious control of language (mode) parallels a shift in the other two dimensions: toward more abstract, remote subject matter (field), and increased responsibility for self within more complex and diverse social relationships (tenor). Four aspects of mode, discussed below, are apparent as children learn to express ideas more explicitly in both speech and writing.

Function. When they come to school, children are able to use language for familiar purposes or functions. Because the teacher puts them in new situations, increasingly they use language for new purposes. Their language and especially their writing becomes more specialized and less dependent on the present context. The following four characteristics of function illustrate this transition from familiar to new.

First, children's writing is often given the familiar support of an immediate, concrete situation. When Rick writes about his seeds, they are in front of him, in his hands and under his eyes. There is no gap in time or place to complicate the already demanding writing process for this first grader:

> I Notist that My SeeDs Ar Puffing up., And
> The Skin on one of My Yellow Eyed Beens
> is Pelling Off. And They Ar SProtting.

Many of the objects of observation are not only concretely present, they are also dynamically changing from moment to moment, providing a narrative sequence to be captured in words. Don's generalizations are based on many observations of the tadpole's ascent and descent:

> Tadpoles
> The Tadpoles Useale stay at the bottom.
> the Tadpoles wiggle their tails up to the
> top and float down to the bottom. The Tad
> Poles are 1 to 1½ cm. long.

While children's writing is always connected in some way to their immediate experience, this connection is sometimes stretched to more removed places and times. After observing his adopted tree on the school grounds, Steve returns to the classroom and writes:

> are tree still has the two wite spoots on it.
> It has a pealed spot and I learned that
> Bark has two lairs on it
> are tree dosent have leaves yeat.
> are tree is not 8 years old.

Even more removed are the thought ramblings written after the farm trip, the newsletter articles written at the end of the week, and requests for permission to go on a trip scheduled for the future. Another kind of distance from the here and now is found in writing which deals with more abstract concepts such as the general characteristics of butterflies as set forth by Polly, a second grader:

> . . . there are many butterfly's in many
> colors on each side there is a color just the
> same on the other . . .

Second, children write in an unself-conscious mixture of transactional, expressive, and poetic functions (Britton, 1970). At the same time, they begin to produce writing which is specialized in function as they try out registers of poetry, story, and report.

Recording their brine shrimp observations on a chart, children use many different functions of written language. Although the purpose is ostensibly scientific and transactional, both expressive and poetic elements appear in the texts. Children reveal their personal stance toward their own role. Daniel himself is very much a part of his brine shrimp experiences.

> Yesterday morning when I was looking at
> the Brine shrimp eggs I found out that the
> Brine shrimp eggs had spots. I also found
> out that the Brine shrimp eggs were lighter
> in color. I nodised that my experiment
> worked with my Brine Shrimp in 1 tabele-
> spoon of salt.

Children begin to write in the various genres they hear, without copying explicit models. Deborah seems to have abstracted the distinctive features of impersonal informational books—"Sandstorms are storms that are caused by very strong winds . . ."—while Mary knows the rules for story: "One day Little Red Hen was walking home from her friend's house and she heard something in the bushes."

Third, children love to make things, including books of all shapes and sizes. Making of "written constructs" is undertaken, as Britton (1970) has said, for the "delight of utterance." Yet, children are also put in situations which require them to use talk and writing to communicate information or ideas to others.

Last, children begin to use oral and written language to formulate and control their ideas, and to organize their experiences. Mary spontaneously compares human beings and brine shrimp on the observation chart:

> His food is bigger than he is
> and we are bigger than are food is.

The teacher, however, has helped Mary and the other children learn to use language systematically to aid their thinking, for example by making charts and outlines with them before expecting them to write.

Audience. Children write for familiar audiences of teacher, friends, and parents. They apply their conversational resources in a collaborative writing situation, working out ideas and reading each other's writing. They also write to more distant audiences, and thus have to be more explicit in order to communicate. Even parents, usually intimate collaborators in text construction, are distant audiences when they have not shared their children's school experiences.

Children have frequent opportunities to write alone, without a collaborating audience (other than the internal audience of self). Whereas newsletter articles are often written jointly, thought ramblings and observations are regular "solo" events (though growing out of social experiences). This new experience of writing without an external, collaborative audience is supported by provision of a collaborative audience before and after the writing—during planning of permission letters, for example, or during sharing of written and oral observations. Further support comes from familiar aspects of field—things concretely present, and of tenor—shared and understood experiences with these things.

Teacher as audience. The teacher is a special audience who participates in the writing process in ways which fit each child's maturity. She helps the less experienced writers formulate thought in words by building on their written or oral fragments and relating these to the whole. With the more experienced writers she directs their attention to the *way* they say things (still appreciating their content) and to particular conventions of written forms. With these children her tone of voice is different as she directs her comments to language itself. For instance, second grade Polly, a secure, fluent writer, is helped to discover rules for the use of capital letters when the teacher asks "Why did you make *permission* a capital P? Is it a special word that needs to be capitalized?"

Channels for expression. Children know they can talk, paint, build, and play, as well as write about their experiences. As in the early years at home, they express their thoughts in their own words, using their own approximate spelling, handwriting, and punctuation. Writing is increasingly valued, and repeated writing events give children practice in composing different kinds of texts. Their books are given a place of honor and other children are seen reading them.

In shaping the mode of discourse the teacher allows children to represent meaning in familiar ways while also introducing them to the possibilities of written language in more specialized functions, about more distant subjects, and for more remote audiences. She helps them cope with the demands of solo discourse and of formal conventions by balancing these demands (or the new aspects of mode) with continued support from familiar aspects of field, tenor, and mode of discourse.

Children's Writing Supported by the Classroom Context

Early writing (and other new learning) is thus supported or scaffolded in several ways. First, as has been described above, connections are maintained between the familiar and the new, between what children already know and can do, and what they can only do with collaborative help (Bruner, 1975; Cazden, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978) from teachers and peers.

Writing is also supported by the way the teacher directs physical resources and human relationships in the environment. This overall organization enables children to discover generalizations and patterns in whatever they are studying and to use these ideas in their own texts. They become aware of different forms of writing from the many language enriched opportunities in the classroom.

Finally, children's early writing is supported by the way the teacher views her role. She accepts and uses children's approximations. The teacher is not attempting to shape individual response, but to create a meaningful context within which children are free to construct their own personal representations through writing and other valued means, trying new ways as well as familiar. She responds to these representations, helping children develop and express their meanings more fully and weaving their fragments into a meaningful whole. Thus she provides a scaffold for their efforts enabling them to go beyond what they could do by themselves.

Looking back, Sam's small and implicit account of his farm trip with which this paper opens can be seen as a fragile bit of text supported by an extremely complex set of past and present contextual circumstances. As approximate as it is, it has given him practice in structuring the web of meaning (Vygotsky, 1934/1962). Though incomplete in itself, this individual web is sustained and completed by a larger, more complex web of social and experiential meaning, shared by Sam and his classmates. They are able to "do things with friends" and to use language in an unself-conscious way as they move gradually toward more conscious control of written language within a meaning-centered community.

Note

1. This study took place within the classroom of Jeana Hodges, The Greensview School, Upper Arlington School District, Upper Arlington, Ohio (See Platt, 1982).

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Gay Su Pinnell

Communication in Small Group Settings

> He was so prompt, frank, explicit and decisive upon committees and in conversation, not even Samuel Adams was more so, that he soon seized upon my heart. —John Adams in a tribute to Thomas Jefferson (quoted in Padove, 1942, p. 31)

Both past and present societies have valued the ability to talk effectively with others. The "business of life" is conducted through human interaction between two or more individuals. In all kinds of social settings, including families, churches, businesses, and schools, decisions are negotiated through group discussion.

Children first encounter group conversation in small, informal family interactions at meals and other times. As individuals grow and experience wider social contexts, greater discussions skills are demanded. The ability to act and discuss are prominent in almost all subject matter areas taught in elementary and secondary schools. Beyond the content and skills that make up a subject, all have embedded within them as well a "hidden curriculum," in which language *itself* is being taught. Students learn a subject and in the process, they learn how to talk *about* a subject.

Periodic reviews of American classrooms (for example, Silberman, 1970; Goodlad, 1984) indicate more emphasis on paper and pencil measures of achievement than on oral language skills. Yet, language experts (see, for example, Britton, 1970; Pradle, 1982; Rosen & Rosen, 1973; Torbe & Medway, 1981) continue to stress the importance of using language effectively and suggest that part of assessing learning is observing how well students are able to discuss the content of a particular topic.

After schooling, skill in group discussion becomes even more important. Success in social, civic, and professional groups depends partly on one's ability to converse in informal and formal settings. Business is often conducted through board meetings, committees, planning groups, and staff meetings. A new trend in industry is the use of "quality circles," meetings in which workers discuss their tasks and roles and make group plans for improving the quality of production. Skill in presenting ideas, backing them up with information, linking them to others' ideas, turning the discussion to a new topic, and persuading others are important for success in most of the professions and in business and industry.

Group skills are especially important if the individual desires to be in a supervisory or management position. As adults in the workplace, people are often evaluated and monetary rewards are connected to their language abilities in group discussion. Popular "how to succeed" books often advise the upwardly mobile to learn to negotiate and to polish their conversational skills. To understand the important processes involved in group discussion, we need to observe what happens when people are actively engaged in trying to share meaning.

This article presents some observations of young adults in their last years of professional training as they engage in discussion, trying and often struggling to share meaning. Examples are

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drawn from a series of ten two-hour small group discussions in a course, in several committee meetings, and at two conferences for practicing professionals, all sponsored by The Ohio State University's Commission on Interprofessional Education and Practice. The commission brings together members of the helping professions to discuss issues of common concern, such as ethics and changing societal values. With the goal of increased collaboration among professions, the commission first provides a setting in which communication can take place. Beginning with the expectation that people will stay on topic, will try to understand each other, and will strive for some kind of shared meaning, these interprofessional groups provide a rich setting for the observation of group discussion skills. Discussions were audio-taped and simultaneously observed by two researchers who took notes to provide contextual information. Tapes were transcribed and analyzed for content and for strategies which might be particularly helpful in establishing meaning across professional groups.

First, elements of context, including the individual perspectives and expectations of individuals, will be discussed. Then some of the skills of group discussion will be outlined with segments of transcribed discussions as illustrations. Last, implications for language learning will be stated.

The Context for Group Discussion

To be successful in group discussion, an individual must know how to operate in ways that are appropriate for the particular social context. Context includes the setting—the physical arrangement, topic, assigned task, length of time allotted, official roles of members, stated outcomes of the discussion, etc. The context also includes many less clearly defined factors: the individual perspectives and expectations of each member (and these often are not known by others), interpersonal relationships among participants, and the mutual expectations all hold. The context may change from moment to moment; for example, as the focus changes, as different people get the floor, or as understanding of the task changes. As the context changes, role relationships change and so do definitions of appropriate behavior. A comment considered appropriate as the group is settling down may be quite inappropriate in the middle of a serious discussion. Being aware of the context, defining it, matching one's behavior to it, and signaling contextual definitions to others are all important group discussion skills. As Erickson and Shultz (1981) express it, the capacity for monitoring contexts is "an essential feature of social competence; the capacity to assess *when* a context is as well as *what* it is" [italics added] (p. 147).

Effective group conversationalists know how to "read the context," which may change from moment to moment and to select appropriate language behaviors from their repertoires. This ability is not simply a "catch up" operation. Since the context changes so rapidly, participants must actually predict the context and help to shape it so their comments will fit in and be understood. Successful group conversationalists signal their intentions *to* others and at the same time are aware of signals *from* others which allow them to predict the context for discourse during the next few moments.

Individual Perspectives and Expectations

People continuously accumulate understandings which they organize, creating their own unique ways of viewing the world. Each time we meet a new situation, problem, or social interaction, we interpret it and act on the basis of what we know already. We "frame" what is happening in terms of our own accumulated knowledge, and the language we use reflects that way of framing.

In the group setting, as people listen and talk, they simultaneously organize meanings in terms of their own "frames," consisting of perceived intentions of speakers and listeners involved, purposes of the discussion, knowledge of the topic (along with personal memories which may come to mind), and notions of words, gestures, and ways of behaving that are appropriate for discussion groups in general and for this particular group and topic. When people frame knowledge in similar ways, they tend to share meaning more easily. Group discussion is smoother, proceeds more rapidly. There may or may not be agreement on points, but people understand each others' views more readily. Often, however (and more often then we are inclined to realize), people frame knowledge in quite different ways.

Participants in interprofessional discussions are generally well educated and linguistically sophisticated; nevertheless, they come from a wide range of personal backgrounds and have had training and work experiences which are highly specific to their professions. These experiences have enculturated them in the values, practices, and language of a particular profession. They view issues and topics differently; they define problems and solutions in different terms; they have different sources of knowledge and ways to talk about it; and they have different notions of the purposes and rules of group discussion and decision-making processes.

The following example, at the beginning of a discussion, illustrates different ways a problem may be perceived. Each professional is commenting on the case of a severely burned patient who was arguing for his right to refuse painful treatment and thus to die. The physician in the case places greatest priority on sustaining life and defines his role as saving the patient and persuading him to live. In the doctor's framework, the desire for death, no matter how difficult the patient's circumstances, is a temporary aberration. He chooses words ("suffering," "suicide," "treatment," "rehabilitation") that refer to the physical condition and treatment. The lawyer, on the other hand, frames the problem in a more distant and abstract way by referring to written regulations and civil laws and the patient's right to decide his own destiny. He does not take personal responsibility for the outcome of the decision (death) but argues logical points, using words like "contractual," "absolute," "ultimate," "consent," "right," "competent," to support the argument. The third professional, the minister, makes a statement that has a philosophical/religious tone. Using words like "sacred," "quality of life," "posit," "divine," "creator," "God," he supports the patient's right to choose but bases that support on a set of religious beliefs. Each person makes a rather long statement; segments are represented below:

Doctor: He is blind and suffering a lot of pain. . .one would have to think about his reaction. . .as they carried out the day-by-day treatment. So what are some of the medical issues we would have to face? Well, one is that the physicians in this case could not enter into a suicide pact with him by letting him go home. This is against all the training and inculcation we've had for years in medicine. . .ultimately a physician would have to sell rehabilitation to this man.

Lawyer: Under the present state of the law there is no question about the right of this man to refuse treatment. The law now is that a competent, conscious adult may refuse permission for performance of any medical or surgical procedure—as we all know the problem of signing your consent. That this right is absolute. . .even if it is also clear that the ultimate result. . . .is the patient's death. . . .It's been spoken of as a contractual kind of situation.

Minister: The essential theological dilemma that enforced treatment raises is the tension. . .between life as sacred and the quality of life of any individual. The world's religions affirm the sacred nature of life. They posit a divine role in the initiation of life, and they acknowledge the significance of God, by whatever name, in sustaining, nurturing, protecting, and enhancing life. . .but the freedom to choose is expressive of our most basic relationship to our creator. . . .I would support his right to refuse treatment because his basic humanity gives him this freedom.

Each speaker's language is formal, taking on the "tone" of written and oral communication peculiar to the profession served. The main task is to express the points of view, to get them out for examination. Participants are not expected to question or convince others, simply to present their own perspectives; negotiation of meaning is just starting.

When people with such disparate views enter into serious discussion together, they must begin to construct meanings common to the group. A repeating theme in interprofessional discussion is awareness of the need to achieve understanding among diverse groups. That common meaning can only be achieved through talk. Another group of professionals begins a discussion with an informal side conversation which illustrates their awareness of the importance of language.

Educator: The mystery that surrounds the professions gives us power and if we demystify it, then we will lose power.

Minister: Yes, I wanted (a speaker) to stop using words like "eschatological" because he was creating barriers.

Educator: Well, we all do that, and we do it with relish.

Recognizing and overcoming such disparity forces participants to work harder at their discussion and to employ all available strategies to share meaning.

Goals in Group Discussion

A discussion group may be motivated by a mutual liking, a decision to learn from each other, or to accomplish a mutual goal. The group may operate informally or within an external structure such as a university class or corporate meeting. Discussion participants may be individuals who enter a conversation eager to promote their own goals; however, there are usually some strongly operating mutual goals.

Members of the group participate together in constructing a conversational text which has common meaning. Together the members try to keep the discussion going, take turns, keep central ideas and tasks in mind, listen and talk appropriately and responsively, and possibly keep trying for some kind of conclusion or decision. As they talk and listen, they weave a "web of meaning" which accumulates as the discussion continues. While group members may not have the same individual purposes or perspectives, they try through sharing to understand the meanings expressed by others and to make their own meanings understood. The group as a whole, then, begins to create a new set of meanings, larger than and different from the collection of individual meanings.

Sometimes, groups do not accept or understand their task is to explore a problem through extended discussion. In that case, the group may interact briefly and then break apart or the discussion may remain at a superficial, conversational level, similar to that of a cocktail party where people constantly move in and out of conversational groups. While this level of interaction serves a social function, it seldom satisfies the need for more complete communication. Many of the elements of group discussion are present, even in casual conversation; yet, participants generally are not deeply involved.

Much school "discussion" either remains at this superficial level or is restricted to rigid, whole-class sessions where students raise hands to answer the teacher's questions. There is not the time nor the expectation that students become deeply involved in discussion with each other. Yet, even younger students are capable of carrying out extended discussion with each other to achieve their own goals. They learn and use new social actions and linguistic rules in the process. Those who rarely encounter anything but the most casual group conversation or limited, teacher-centered discussion may find discussion intimidating later in life. We can gain further insight into the complex skills needed for group discussion by observing adults as they interact in settings such as that provided by the interprofessional commission.

The Skills of Group Discussion

A group discussion is not a simple collection of listening and speaking skills; it is a dynamic event which requires participants to orchestrate a number of language skills, all used simultaneously. We sometimes naively assume that knowledge of a topic is all that is necessary to discuss it effectively; therefore, we spend most of our time in school trying to develop content knowledge. Being successful in group discussion requires using both knowledge of the topic and of social situations to determine what to say, how to say it, when to say it, to whom to address it, and when not to say it. It is a complex ability and one that develops over a long period of time as people have experience in many group settings.

Using Explicit Language

Theorists in cognitive psychology (notably Polanyi, 1962) have stated that we do not hold all of our knowledge in explicit forms which are easy to reflect on and manipulate. Indeed, much of our knowledge is implicit or tacit and our values and belief systems are likewise deeply held. We reflect on these unconscious factors and bring them to conscious awareness only when we are in situations where we are forced to communicate with others whose implicit knowledge, frame of reference, and/or belief system are different from our own. In group conversation, people often experience a kind of disjuncture or gap between their own implicitly held beliefs or values and those of others in the group. This disjuncture, while it may bring some discomfort or conflict, may also bring a heightened awareness out of which learners can construct new meanings which go beyond the old (see Polyani, 1962). Thus it is that the meanings shared in the group situation are not a collection of the individual meanings. A new set of meanings is being made.

Signaling Intentions

Speakers in groups use what Gumperz & Tannen (1979) have called "contextualization cues" (see, also, Green & Wallat, 1981; Keller, 1981). Those are language behaviors which are habitually used to signal what an utterance means and how it is to be understood in the context. These may be single words, gestures, body language, and shift in tones which signal expectations on the part of the speaker or the listener. The cue may tell how a sentence relates to what precedes or follows it. It may help the listener to understand how the comment is related to other parts of the discussion; that is, it may help to "tie" the discussion together. The speaker may use cues to signal that the comment is an extension of a former comment or to communicate a shift in meaning. For example, group participants may say "yes," signaling an extension of the example or point; or, they might say "yes, but," signaling a recognition of the previous point as well as a coming disagreement with it.

Listening

Each person needs to be able to interpret signals in order to judge the conversational intent of others. Listening, then, becomes a critical skill. It is only by listening, not just to the content of messages but to all the signals from others, that a speaker can express his or her own meanings in terms which are appropriate and meaningful to others. Thus, by listening and understanding, a speaker creates a situation in which others are likely to listen to and understand the individual speaking.

Interacting

Successful group conversationalists use a variety of interactive skills to create a good, working discussion. Much research has focused on analysis of interaction (Bales, 1950, 1970; Bellack, Kliebard, Hyman, & Smith, 1966; Flanders, King, & Cazden, 1974) and many category systems exist which are useful for looking at behaviors. The important thing about these interaction skills is that they contribute to shared meaning by their function in the group setting. These were observed in interprofessional groups:

1. Getting and keeping the floor. Participants use nonverbal signals such as a slight raising of the hand or leaning forward. They also obtain the floor by interruption, often starting sentences with "Well, I," "I," or "I think." They keep the floor by similar means, even when obviously searching for the right words or phrases or examples, by using "uh," and other markers.
2. Extending others' remarks. Participants often begin comments with "yes," "you're right," "another thing," etc., which signal that they are going on with the points made by the previous speaker.
3. Clarifying others' remarks. Clarifying involves some kind of action to better understand the points made by someone in the group. Participants may use questions or try to restate other remarks.
4. Remediating one's own remarks. Participants can often be observed stopping in mid-sentence to "edit" their own remarks, meanwhile using fillers such as "uh" or "well" to signal that they still want to keep the floor. This behavior is particularly evident as they struggle to make explicit the knowledge which is implicitly held.
5. Changing the focus or subject. Participants may signal a change of subject openly by saying something like "I'd like to talk about. . ." or "I have a question." Or, a speaker may change the focus more subtly through a related example ("that reminds me. . .") or through moving from an objective or logical perspective to an emotional one.
6. Maintaining the group. To greater and lesser degrees, group participants help to maintain the "groupness" of the discussion by inviting comments from others, asking questions which help the group focus on the topic, keeping the central task out front ("we're supposed to. . ."), and recognizing others' comments verbally or with nonverbal signals such as smiles, nods, laughter (when appropriate). At times, participants may ask permission of others to go on or to give nonverbal feedback. Many speakers use "OK," combined with a look at the person or persons addressed, liberally sprinkled through their comments.

Sharing Meaning

Group discussion participants can be observed using a variety of strategies to share meaning with others:

1. Tying meanings together. Members of a group work together to construct a conversation that is cohesive. They create a text, that is, a series of meanings which are not random (Green & Wallat, 1981). Members of the group may refer to previously discussed points or stories they now all share, use common images, and use conversational devices to signal their willingness to share in creating the discussion.
2. Referring to authority. Group members refer to publicly known authority and to those they have encountered through their own experiences.
3. Using examples. Speakers use brief examples from their own life experiences or they refer to examples which are public knowledge.
4. Using words and phrases which have common meaning. Speakers use words such as "conservative," "poverty," with the assumption that those would communicate meaning. It is important to point out that use of such labels can lead to miscommunication in groups; yet, this is one of the most commonly used devices. Group members sometimes find that certain words, assumed to have common meanings, have different meanings to different people. Others change meaning according to the context or the special training or experience a person has had in using it. Participants also use common metaphors to evoke shared cultural images that illustrate points.
5. Using narrative. One of the most interesting strategies for sharing meaning is storytelling. This technique was observed in almost every interprofessional group session and appeared frequently throughout the sessions. As professionals from different backgrounds struggled toward understanding, they often used extended narratives from their own experiences. Once stories were shared, they became part of the group's

"repertoire" and could be referred to in abbreviated form as examples. Use of the narrative in group conversation has been noted in research such as Tannen's (1982) analysis of stories told at a Thanksgiving dinner.

Discussions 1 and 2 illustrate some of the skills outlined above. In Discussion 1, although participants obviously struggle and sometimes fail to make meaning clear, the discussion generally "works." In Discussion 2, there is little involvement.

Discussion 1. Setting: Theological students Tom, Phil, and Carolyn, each from different seminaries and religious groups, and Mary, a graduate nursing student, are talking about poverty. The discussion grew out of several articles which all participants read and from analyses of codes of ethics published by various professional groups. For several minutes, they talk at an abstract or theoretical level, each giving information gained from professional training or reading.

Mary: I think the two are really opposed when you. . .think about it.	*Gets the floor.* *Signals opinion — "I think. ."*
Tom: What are opposed? Capitalism and free enterprise?	*Questions to clarify.* *Refers to written materials.*
Mary: No, no. Free enterprise and what we're saying.	*Clarifies earlier statement.*
Tom: Oh, oh. Our goals. Oh, yes, well, the extreme, at least the theoretical opposition of points would be capitalism and Marxism, OK? Uh, and uh, you know, ultimate socialist state. Our problem is that we know that for some reason or another capitalism fails to reach out to all. And the other problem is that Marxism reaches out to all and then takes away the human dignity. OK? So, somehow we have to work this, weave this thing together in a balance.	*Signals understanding. Refers to former discussion of goals. Holds floor—"Oh, yes, well. . ." Refers to information from reading.* *Focuses discussion at theoretical level.* *Uses metaphors, "reach out," "weave."* *Looks around.* *Asks for confirmation of understanding by group—"OK?"*

Soon Phil turns the discussion to focus more on action than on analysis and introduces the idea of personal responsibility.

Phil: We're gonna debate the economics and that, that's. . .I believe what's the problem is. Professionals have a tendency to sit back and say "Well, what is it?" Well it's the structure. . .rather than getting down and doing something about it. Now. . .I realize there are complex issues involved, but I think this is professionals at work. We're gonna debate it up here (points to head) and it's never gonna get better there. . .and the problem's not gonna be solved.	*Changes tone of discussion to more emotional and personal. Signals opinion—"I believe. ."* *Recognizes others might disagree.* *Uses dramatic tone and gestures.* *Acts out argument.* *Changes tone again with "now."* *Looks around at group; recognizes argument that might arise.* *Indicates metaphor nonverbally—"head" for intellectual.*
Carolyn: It's because it doesn't touch us personally. My child is not starving.	*Extends Phil's remarks. Focuses with personal example.*
Tom: The point is that you have to deal with the reason of it. If you give up on the fact of the immense problem of distribution of wealth in the world and you try to come out with a simplified reason which is usually the liberal dole business, OK? It does, may work in the short run but it could be disastrous in the long run.	*Gets floor by indicating a response to Carolyn's remark.* *Edits own remarks and revises them.* *Attempts to refocus discussion at theoretical level.* *Uses commonly held label—"liberal."* *Asks for confirmation—"OK?"*
Phil: That's right, but you know what? You can be so caught up in the long run that you never get to the short run too, and that I believe to be the problem of the conservative element.	*Gets floor, signaling agreement, but immediately signals qualification—"but. . ."* *Uses metaphor—"long run. . ."* *Uses commonly held label—"conservative." Refocuses discussion on personal level.*
Tom: But the logic is there. You see it. I mean, uh, are you gonna feed your kid sugar all the time because in the short run it's pleasing to him? I mean I just don't. . .	*Gets floor by signaling conflict.* *This time, uses analogy to make point. Uses question form to signal challenge.*
Phil: I'm not. . .I don't think that's a fair analysis of what I just said.	*Interrupts in protesting tone.*

The speakers in this interchange come from different personal and work backgrounds. Carolyn had been a social worker before entering theological school; Mary had been a nurse for many years; Tom had been a medic. They are in different institutions of higher education and have different philosophies. Each challenges the views of others, seeking mutual understanding on the issues discussed. They use logical arguments, examples, common labels, and metaphor.

(continued on page 252)

(continued from page 251)

At this point in the discussion, Carolyn uses the narrative. She illustrates her points by recounting some of her experiences working with an open shelter. Sentences appearing in quotations are spoken in a dramatic "role taking" tone as Carolyn tells her story. In response, Tom begins a logical argument, then abandons it, taking up the narrative style himself.

Carolyn: Well, look at what happens. . .I'll use something I'm involved in, in trying to solve the problem of transients coming out even further in the suburbs. We have an open shelter and we have a lot of transients coming through. A person shows up on the church doorstep saying, "I'm hungry. I have nowhere to sleep." Instead of us saying "I need to reach out to you. Come home with me. I'll feed you. . .put you up," we start referring. To the welfare council, the whatever council. . .They say, "Oh, I'm sorry. We can't give you that funding. You don't have an address." So, we go to another council to get an address just to get the guy some food. And I'm thinking, "Hold it. What happened to the church saying, 'Come in. Let me give you some clothes. Let me give you a warm place to sleep' ". . .We get so caught up in going through the proper channels. . .and making sure this guy didn't take advantage of the church the night before. . .	*Gets floor with "well."* *Begins to make a general statement, stops, begins again by telling a story.* *Spoken in role-taking tone with gestures.* *Changes from dramatic tones to narrative tone.* *Tone changes as she concludes story and makes general statement.*
Tom: Um, our problem started out as we recognized the basic problems in structure and I was not trying to get away from that. Our structure, the problem [analyzes levels of structure]. We had 21 Haitians come by and there was no place for them to stay. The city could not. . .it was a little town who couldn't afford to take care of a North Carolina problem. So, for the first time, it was decided, "Why don't we just open up our parish hall?" I mean, it doesn't take genius to figure that out but it was the first time in ten years that somebody had done it. You know? [He continues the story at some length.]	*Gets floor by signaling intention to speak—"um. . ."* *Refers to readings. Attempts to change focus to theoretical one. Makes long statement, repeating ideas from readings.* *Then, changes focus to provide a long example from own experience.* *Uses role-taking tone of voice.*

In subsequent discussion, the group argues over the meaning of human survival and whether or not people need to steal for survival.

This group discussion covers a range of issues and members move easily from formal references to theory to purely personal narratives. The issue of poverty and systemic rigidity is one they have studied; it is also close to their personal experiences and interests. They have content to offer and they want to share meaning; hence, their deep involvement and their willingness to continue the struggle through difficult communication situations.

Sometimes, even though participants accept the assignment of extended discussion, there is a lack of cohesion. People do not seem to understand each other or to focus on the topic. The conversation may proceed in an aimless way without anyone perceiving shared meaning. There may be hostility, boredom, or frustration; some participants may feel awkward or embarrassed by others' responses to their comments. Such problems can be traced to differences among group members and the way they view the topic, the rules of group conversation, or the world in general.

In Discussion 2, a group which previously engaged in extended and focused discussion has some difficulty with the topic of nuclear war. They continue as assigned for the entire period, but they have real problems. First, several members of the group resist the discussion as "inappropriate" for professionals; second, there is wide disagreement among group members concerning a professional stance toward the topic; and third, many group members simply feel helpless and ignorant concerning the whole issue. The following segment of the 90-minute discussion illustrates the "off task" quality of the discussion.

Discussion 2. Setting: Janet, a dentist and graduate student; Leon, a law student; Mark, a medical student; David, a college teacher; and Carol and Jane, graduate nursing students, are shown a film about nuclear war and asked to discuss their professional roles and responsibilities relative to that issue.

Janet: I am a dentist and I have a hard time imagining what I would do as a professional in this whole episode.	*Gets floor.* *Focuses discussion on her own profession.*
Mark: Put in temporary fillings. (Laughter from the group.)	*Changes tone of the discussion by responding to serious comment with humor.*
Janet (seriously): I don't think they would be too worried about their teeth at that point	*Ignores Mark's attempt at humor by responding seriously to the remark. Group, however, has reinforced and responded to Mark.*
About 10 minutes later.	
Carol: Well, the ethical problem is whether we should try to influence our leaders as professionals, like the doctors with their. . .	*Tries to focus discussion by defining the problem. Gets floor—"well. . ."* *Gives example which is common knowledge of group members.*
David: I assume it is not just the leaders.	*Gets floor. States own understanding of previous remarks.*
Leon: Well, foreign policy, I mean this is a foreign policy issue, isn't it? We are not planning to attack ourselves, so it's got to be somebody else.	*Gets floor, signaling intention to speak — "well. . ."* *Asks for confirmation — "isn't it?"* *Remediates own remarks — "I mean. ."*
Mark: Well, Cleveland they can have. (Laughter from the group.)	*Changes tone and blocks serious discussion by using humor. Group members, who have been leaning forward, lean back, relaxing and laughing.*
Much later — almost at the end of the session.	
Mark: You might have a burn. . .you might have 4,000 people with burns and only 10 burn beds. But that's the same issue we had last week, really.	*Remediates own remarks.* *Gives example.* *Refers to previous experience shared by the group.* *Changes topic of discussion; focuses on last week's class and compares it to this discussion.*
Leon: At least we talked about it last week.	*Shows awareness of quality of discussion.*
Carol: Where's our theologian?	*Changes focus with question. (humor).*
Jane: He's the one who really has the issue here. It's his responsibility to make sure we say prayers and all.	*Changes subject again, extending the joke started by Carol.*
Leon: I'm glad it's almost 7:30.	*Changes subject again—back to the class. Implies dissatisfaction with discussion; remark is considered humorous by group.*

The group remains at a light and superficial level throughout the relatively long discussion period. The communication seems to follow certain rules which the group sustains. Whenever serious questions are raised, someone in the group makes a joke or turns the discussion aside. While they continue to talk about the assigned topic, they do not feel productive at the end. At the same time, we can observe that they actually do collaborate, if only to keep the discussion "at arm's length" for the designated period. Contrasting this discussion with the earlier example of the discussion about poverty, we can see the powerful role of intention and purpose in creating the text of group discussion.

Promoting Discussion Goals

Group discussion requires a complex range of language skills which participants must know how to use simultaneously as they interact. They must listen, talk, and select from a repertoire of strategies those which will be effective for the particular moment. Even the language-sophisticated young professionals have difficulty in creating a discussion and keeping it going. We have all had the experience of "not doing well" in a discussion, of having difficulty sharing meaning or making inappropriate comments, or of simply having trouble finding something to say. If we as adults experience difficulty, we can expect that children will need many experiences if they are to acquire skills needed for group discussion.

We cannot take it for granted that children will acquire those important skills without a deliberate attempt to develop them in school settings. Students need many opportunities for discussion with peers and with those older than themselves. They need to be deeply involved in discussing topics they know and care about. At first, children may need structure for the discussion as well as the guidance of the teacher. Later, they may be able to manage their own discussions and even become more aware of them through process observation and feedback. As discussion becomes a normal, everyday school activity, children will feel comfortable doing it and will be ready to become aware of their own functioning in groups. They can try out different roles and leadership positions and can learn to assess the appropriateness of their own responses and those of others. At all levels of education—kindergarten through college—the group discussion should be the expected language activity rather than, in Marland's (1977) terms, "linguistically alien" territory.

Above all, school districts need to implement policies which encourage and make possible the teaching of group discussion skills. Instead of narrow definitions of "listening" and "speaking," we need to develop in children those skills as they are actually practiced in the social world.

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John Bates

Educational Policies that Support Language Development

The success and failure of school systems lies primarily in their ability to develop strong language capabilities in the children they serve. Traditionally "failures" have been measured in terms of the numbers of children who are unable to negotiate meaning at school and, as a result, fail seriously behind or leave their studies. Those children "fail"; yet, viewed another way, systems fail children by not providing adequate opportunities and support for the development of language abilities, the first and essential step toward success in all areas.

In the last decade it has become increasingly apparent that opportunities can be provided for the vast majority of children to experience success in school language programs. But the delivery of language programs cannot be taken for granted. As teaching populations grow older, more experienced, and sometimes entrenched in their methods, it is important for systems to develop policies, delivery methods, and implementation procedures which are supportive of the development of effective classroom practices.

This article suggests ten guidelines formulated to assist policy decision makers in designing system-wide approaches to creating language programs. While of equal importance, they are listed in a progression which represents the place in the educational hierarchy of the person who can best deliver the policy the guideline represents.

Guideline 1. *Work from a broad general policy which has been written with an understanding of good language practice.*

Most states and provinces have developed sound policies with regard to language instruction in their schools. For example, in Ontario, policies with regard to language state explicitly that by the end of the primary division (grades 1 to 3), the program should have provided the child with the opportunity to acquire a number of competencies, including (a) listening with sensitivity and discrimination; articulating his or her own ideas, thoughts, and feelings with confidence and lucidity; (b) appreciating the significance and function of reading in his or her own life; and (c) expressing experiences, thoughts, and feelings in writing with clarity and sensitivity. Provisions for the junior division (grades 4-6) state that the program will have provided the child with the opportunity to develop higher level competencies, including (a) using reading as a source of information; (b) extending and consolidating listening skills, (c) developing an appreciation of oral communication and literature, and (d) understanding that writing can be used for many purposes and that purpose determines the form of writing and the kind of language used.

As a result of comprehensive policy statements similar to those outlined above, classrooms in Ontario are changing. Children are being given opportunities to complete tasks which are important to them as individuals. These include writing in journals, often sharing their entries with teachers who may become correspondents within their jour-

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nals, and writing one another through school-established post offices. In both divisions students become actively involved in planning and reporting field trips. Much of the recording in all areas of the curriculum is student planned and produced. Science lessons become the basis for student writing and science notes acquire a decidedly personal flavor.

Language is taking its place as the cohesive element in the structure of classroom programs. In turn, children are being provided with opportunities to develop and practice their language abilities using daily living experiences within the classroom.

Accompanying these policies are a set of broad guidelines designed to provide support for teachers as they develop programs. Figure 1 provides excerpts from these guidelines, which are entitled *Education in the Primary and Junior Division* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1975a):

The policies and guidelines suggest that the interactive processes of education should begin with an invitation to learn and then alternately involve exposures to new and not too distant horizons and further invitations. Written with the development of children as their foremost objective and the support of educators as a strong secondary objective, they permit children to learn in different ways and teachers to teach in different ways. Rather then imposing knowledge at the expense of the well-being of the learner, they support the concept that teacher and student must negotiate meaning if educational programs are to be successful.

Guideline 2. *Provide support for the local development of language guidelines which recognize the abilities and needs of students in local schools.*

While broad guidelines provide parameters for instruction on a district-wide basis, schools should develop local guidelines for the following reasons: (a) educators who have developed guidelines have a feeling of ownership and are more likely to insure their delivery; and (b) local guidelines can accommodate the varying needs of distinct communities of students.

Local guidelines provide a basis from which a school philosophy and practice can develop. Through continual, sometimes incidental review of their practices, teachers who are committed to a guideline begin to develop the ideas more fully, extend their personal knowledge of language instruction, and set down in revisions new ideas as a result of their practice and deliberation.

Local staffs often need help in developing their own language policies. In the Toronto Board of Education document, *A Guideline for a School Language Policy* (1983), basic principles of language instruction are set out and guidance is provided for staffs who wish to develop such policies. The effort is rewarding not only for students but for staff, since such policies provide a base for the development of concurrent programming and related planning for all staff members.

The general aims . . . of the program are to enable children to have access to as many means of communication as possible, to help them extend and refine their communication skills. . .and to encourage them as they begin to find their particular style of communication and as they interact with their world and interpret it to themselves and others. Some components of these aims are to help the child:

- achieve the skill of expressing personal experiences both linguistically and mathematically;
- establish and retain a functional literacy, that is, to enable him or her to understand and interpret essential information from signs, messages, books, and instructions; to compare points of view; to take a critical attitude towards advertising and propaganda; to understand graphic and numerical material in books, magazines, and newspapers;
- read and enjoy books, periodicals, plays, and poetry, and appreciate good writing;
- develop and exercise his or her imagination through a range of vicarious experiences

The ability to use words well and to express oneself with sensitivity, clarity, and conciseness in writing is an achievement that, once developed, will be of lifelong value. To achieve this fluency, children must have something real and personal to write about, a wealth of language with which to express their ideas, and the opportunity and time to write. Writing can be used to inform people, to explain, to describe, to narrate, to give voice to imagination and fantasy, to persuade, to argue, to express feelings, and to generate response. The purpose should determine the form of writing and the kind of language used. . . .

The sources of personal writing are the child's store of observations, feelings, impressions, and imaginings, which can be enriched by a variety of experiences and activities. . . . Experiences—and therefore the writing—gain depth when the teacher helps children to explore them more intensely: to feel what they touch, to listen to what they hear, to observe what they look at. The teacher's commentary in this process provides the language that the children will require to convey their ideas accurately and precisely.

Figure 1. Excerpts from Ontario's guidelines for language programs.

Guideline 3. *Design a formal plan of implementation which emphasizes the place of language in the curriculum and allows for regular review.*

Moving a school system toward the consolidation of any type of organized plan for curriculum implementation is an awesome task. The diversity of subject areas to be covered, the range of development of students and teachers, and the variety of methodologies available are only three of the components affecting the adoption of a coordinated plan. A clear concise plan of implementation allows educators to schedule and distribute resources effectively and insure that the new policies are given proper attention.

The main focus of such a plan must be the language curriculum. In the case of the *Toronto Curriculum Implementation Plan* (Rutledge et al., 1982), "Language Across the Curriculum" is highlighted in year one and other subject areas are linked to it as the plan progresses. Four of the major focuses of the plan are:

1. designation of areas of curriculum to be considered by school staffs on an annual basis—language is included as a designated subject each year
2. flexibility to allow staffs to develop at a rate commensurate with the skills and abilities of individual staff members
3. provision for annual and long-term planning by staff, community, and principal
4. recognition that implementation of curriculum is an ongoing process and that implementation plans should be reviewed and reconstructed regularly (in this case reviewed annually and reconstructed every three years)

Such a plan provides ample opportunity for officials and supervisory staff to designate directions and areas of emphasis; at the same time, local staffs have an opportunity to decide how to implement given aspects of the curriculum and when to take advantage of available resources. By including language each year, the plan underlines the importance of language across the curriculum. Each year, as language and other areas of the curriculum are emphasized, the co-relation between language and those other areas becomes part of the implementation agenda.

Guideline 4. *Provide information for teachers about teaching practice which is valuable, non-threatening, challenging, and compatible with their needs.*

Preservice education has traditionally provided teachers with only a cursory look at teaching practices. Without the opportunity to investigate and fully develop good teaching methods, many teachers have floundered in their individual efforts to develop systems of learning in their classrooms. The effective learning environment for teachers requires opportunities for teachers:

- to have access to information about successful practices and sound theory either through exposure to knowledgeable lecturers or the availability of books and other materials which explicitly describe practice and the theories upon which it is based;
- to interact with their teaching peers to further refine their ideas for practice;
- to attempt methods in their own classrooms with the knowledge that they will be able to discuss their successes and failures with resource people at a later date; and
- to design, implement, and report on experimental programs in concert with their peers.

Through the activities described, teachers "negotiate meaning" to develop programs which in turn help their students to "negotiate meaning."

Guideline 5. *Develop schools where teachers can practice with the assurance that their peers are committed to specific educational practices in language and the idea that all their students can learn from those practices.*

As students move through the school system they are usually exposed to practices which differ widely from grade to grade. Even if the various practices they encounter are good, and they are not always, students do not generally recognize a continuum of practice unless a concentrated effort is made by staff to emphasize the continuum by developing consistent practices throughout the grades.

This consistency is accomplished through strong educational leadership at the local level. Individual principals can gather staff who are committed to the educational ideals related to programming and population. This process can be aided by board mandate which facilitates the hiring of staff.

The Toronto Board of Education has developed a plan involving Inner City Project Schools which addresses the need for a strong commitment on the part of all staff to develop and implement language curricula through a shared decision-making process. Teachers in Toronto's project schools spend extra time talking to parents, taking part in inservice activities, and making decisions which affect their own lives and the lives of their students. They understand that relationships between philosophical viewpoints, theoretical ideas, and classroom practices must be explored to establish the best possible practices relating to language development. By working in project schools, teachers have the opportunity to develop good practices and to see the long-term results of their efforts.

Guideline 6. *Provide opportunities for teachers to work side by side with leaders in the field of language learning.*

An effort is made in the Toronto system to provide small group experiences and one-to-one experiences with visiting educators knowledgeable in their fields. For example, for the past four years James Britton has visited Toronto's project schools for three weeks each autumn. Spending three days in each school, he has had an opportunity to talk to individuals, small groups, and school staffs about what they are doing. Britton (1982) writes:

> I think we are, perhaps for the first time, ready to admit that what the teacher can't do in the classroom can't be achieved by any other means. . . .I do not mean that nobody else matters, nobody else can help. . . .There are great opportunities for people like me—in professional development, initial and in-service training, whatever you call it—provided we see our role as helping them to theorize from their own experience, and build their own rationale and their own body of convictions. For it is when they are actively theorizing from their own experience that they can, selectively, take and use other people's experiences and other people's theories.

The interaction Britton describes can be achieved in part by providing opportunities for teachers to be exposed, even for a short while, to theorists and thinkers who can be supportive of them.

The process that has resulted from these visits is truly interactive. The theorists have learned, the educators have learned and become more confident, and a core of teachers who are willing to explore concepts has been developed.

Guideline 7. *Encourage practices which allow students and teachers to demonstrate their language abilities.*

Several years ago a group of energetic teachers in the Toronto system began to develop a systemwide newspaper written and designed by students. Now distributed regularly but not often, it contains submissions from many parts of the city. Students and teachers effectively develop new ideas about writing and writing programs as they read each issue. The notion of audience is expanded and students and teachers are encouraged through the publication not only to submit writings but also to develop their own formats for audiences.

Teachers have not traditionally had an opportunity to write as part of their described work. Recently, several teachers have elected to write reports on special projects in which they have been involved. My observation has been that teachers find writing difficult at first, but after they have persevered, they find their efforts rewarding. They also learn about the plight of the writer by writing.

Guideline 8. *Create forums so that educators and parents can freely discuss their views and experiences which relate to language learning.*

Each principal in Toronto is required to hold a meeting in the school to discuss the language policies of the board. As part of that effort, a folder of booklets entitled *Teaching Language in the Toronto Schools* (Toronto Board of Education, 1982) is distributed and discussed. Written in a conversational style, the booklets have been translated into the major languages spoken by parents of children in the schools—Greek, Cantonese, Italian, etc.

The intention of these booklets is to provide a quick overview of policy and practice as it pertains to English language teaching in the schools. It is hoped that the booklets will be used as a basis for discussion of programs by teachers and parents when they meet in large groups, for parent interviews, during home visits, and on other occasions. The following excerpt from the elementary booklet is provided to help parents understand the importance of a wide variety of experiences in beginning reading:

> The most important factor is the preparation . . . for reading. Children are given real experiences, sometimes in the form of field trips, or drama, or discussion. They are provided with many examples of "book language" by being read to, so that the language of print is not unfamiliar to them. They are encouraged to relate what they read about [to] their own lives. The classroom provides a wide variety of print material . . . at different reading levels and from a variety of cultures. Many displays of children's own writing are made.

"Big books" which a whole class can read together may be read so that the children can both hear and see the words together. Or children may dictate their own stories to the teacher and then "read" them, once again helping them to "read" their own words written down. Children are encouraged to collect individual words and phrases which they learn to recognize, including signs in the environment, and which they can use in their own writing. They use easy-to-read books and basal readers which usually contain many repetitions so that the children can remember the words and associate them with the print.

Whatever techniques the teacher employs, the focus is always on meaning and enjoyment; practice in the other skills of reading, such as phonics, word-attack skills, and word analysis, is never allowed to take precedence over meaning and pleasure.

Children's attitudes toward school are developed as often at the supper table as they are in classrooms. Teachers and parents must develop forums in which parents are comfortable; educators must also develop a repertoire of strategies about language learning for communicating to parents.

Guideline 9. *Develop non-threatening methods of program and personnel appraisal.*

As policies and practice change, responsible educators in supervisory positions must remain constantly aware of the practices of individual teachers and inform those teachers of changing practices. Regular performance reviews for all educators in a system should provide opportunities for:

- negotiation of goals
- observation of classroom practices
- conferencing which centers on policy and practice
- summative evaluation
- suggested directions which focus on classroom practice and support

Such reviews are successful if they emphasize assisting and supporting personnel in their growth and development. In addition, it is helpful to focus on implementing programs and achieving program goals.

An excellent means of improving practice without evaluating teachers is the classroom appraisal approach, which involves groups of educators in observational tasks and discussions leading toward program changes based upon skills and abilities of students. In the *Appraisal for Better Curriculum* program in Toronto, teams are formed in individual schools, including classroom teachers, the principal, a resource teacher or consultant, and a psychoeducational consultant. The teams select tests and observational tools to observe children at specific points in their school careers. At this time appraisals are carried out in junior kindergarten, and grades one and four. Experimental programs have begun in the seventh grade. By using resources at their disposal team members suggest classroom practices which will help specific groups of students. The teacher, who has helped develop these practices, implements them and periodically returns to the team to report on their effectiveness and to develop new ideas. The result of the program is improved classroom practice and efficient involvement of more classroom educators in supportive roles.

Not all appraisal programs should center on the classroom, the teacher, or the local administrator. Systems, particularly large systems, should depend on outside reviewers to provide a "snapshot" of what is happening in schools in the context of what should or is thought to be happening. The Province of Ontario provides personnel to systems on a regular basis who, as a team, visit staffs to gather their views on what is happening in areas like language curriculum delivery. As well, the team visits classrooms to verify what they have been told. The end product of such reviews is a statement to the local board of education, which usually results in new practices being developed or old ones being revamped.

Guideline 10. *Invite the exploration and discussion of various schools of thought regarding language learning but encourage an emphasis on one of these.*

Teachers need to know about the philosophies behind their practices. In the years following the Second World War growth was so quick that teachers, almost through necessity, were thrust unprepared into classrooms. Very little time was spent helping educators to understand why they were doing what they were doing.

In the past two decades, educators have had opportunities to explore more fully philosophies of education. Developmentalists, behaviorists, humanists, and practical educators have bombarded teachers with their ideas of the best ways to teach. If teachers are to be supported in their classroom practices they must be provided with ample time to explore with one another the fundamental schools of thought in the context of their own learnings. By testing and adjusting various theories and discovering how these can be used to improve their own understandings and practices, teachers strengthen their classroom practices and tailor programs which are best for their children. The "negotiation of meaning" that we seek for children in classrooms is best achieved when teachers are allowed to thrive on the investigation of the "whys" of their actions.

In Closing

The guidelines presented here are by no means inclusive of all of those which work. As a set they suggest the involvement of teachers, students, parents, administrators, and theorists in situations which provide opportunities for dialogue about individual communities and classrooms. It is not insignificant that the same principles of interaction are as important when considering "negotiation of meaning" within a system as they are for classrooms.

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Of Change and Continuity

As indicated by the announcement of the appointment of new editors for *TIP* (see "Contents" page), this issue marks a new stage in the life of *Theory into Practice*. After 10 years as editor and 18 years of association with the journal, Charles M. Galloway is leaving the editorship to devote full time to his duties as chairperson of The OSU College of Education's unit on Educational Policy and Leadership. Also retiring as associate editors are James Kerber (continuing as professor of educational theory and practice) and Lonnie Wagstaff (now serving as associate superintendent of Fort Worth Public Schools).

The new editorial staff affirms the continuing goals of *TIP* as set forth by the previous leadership: "To stage a forum for the creation of an educational literature and authorship which represents the highest quality and excellence in a field of inquiry. . ." and "to advance professional inquiry and to promote positive changes in educational practice." While the new editorial staff will bring its own unique perspectives and abilities to the journal, we are committed to maintaining the level of excellence set by the previous editors. *TIP*'s thematic format, which has served our readers well, will be retained. In addition, we will strive to bring to every issue a fresh perspective and a continuing effort toward ever higher standards of excellence.

Charles Galloway's pride in every issue has been such that he liked to speak of it as "giving birth." With his staff, he conceived and gave birth to a host of extremely well-regarded as well as several award-winning issues. The high standards held by Chuck, Jim, and Lonnie, and their devotion to *TIP* and its mission, have been unflagging and contagious. We thank them for their outstanding contribution to the field of education, and wish them well in their new endeavors.

The *TIP* Editorial Staff